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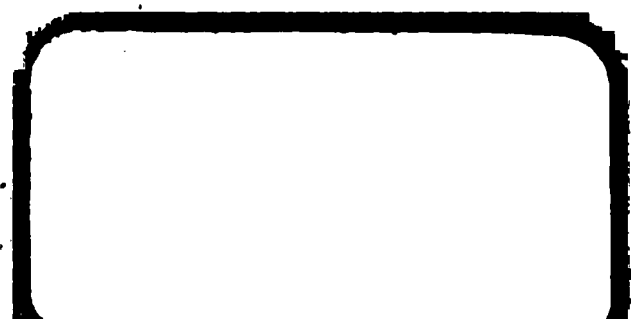
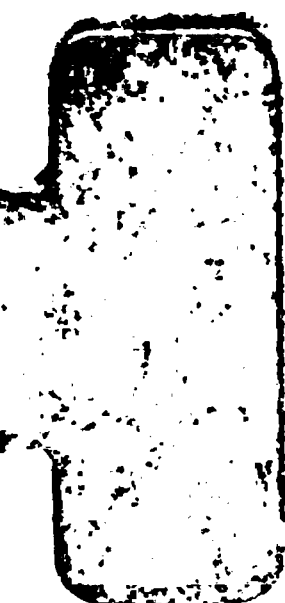
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**LIFE AND TIMES**  
**OF**  
**EDMUND BURKE.**





HISTORY  
OF  
THE LIFE AND TIMES  
OF  
EDMUND BURKE.

BY  
THOMAS MACKNIGHT,

AUTHOR OF 'THE RIGHT HON. B. DISRAELI, M.P., A LITERARY AND POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY;' AND 'THIRTY YEARS OF FOREIGN POLICY: A HISTORY OF THE SECRETARYSHIPS OF THE EARL OF ABERDEEN AND VISCOUNT PALMERSTON.'

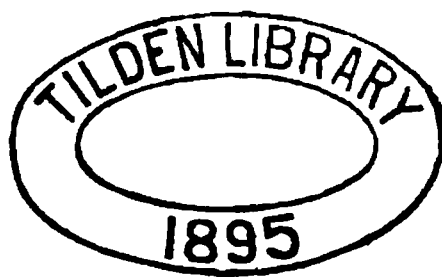
"A man worthy to be held in remembrance, because he did not live for himself."—*Burke's Epitaph on Lord Rockingham.*

3  
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THE concluding portion of this Work was, like the preceding, originally intended for two volumes. The Author afterwards found that it might be completed in one, though the number of pages would necessarily exceed that of either of his former volumes. This course, with the assent of his excellent publishers, he has not hesitated to adopt, as more advantageous to his readers than, on a system of bookmaking, a publication in two volumes of some four hundred pages each, of which the benefit must have been entirely his own. This consideration will, he trusts, satisfactorily account for the volume being somewhat more bulky than is generally desirable. Having unavoidably too much matter for one volume, and perhaps scarcely enough for two, it would have been no difficult task to have padded out a second with an Appendix; but he thinks that he has chosen the less of two evils.



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## CHAPTER XLV.

1796-1797.

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### FAC-SIMILES.

Letter from Burke to his copyist, Swift, inserted at page 407.

Part of a page of the manuscript *Observations on the Conduct of the Minority*, at page 531.

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### ERRATA.

At page 114, last line, for 1785 read 1784.

At page 646, second line, and at page 647, twenty-seventh line, for *Robert Eden*, read *William Eden*.



LIFE AND TIMES  
OF  
EDMUND BURKE.

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CHAPTER XXXII.

1782-1783.

ANTI-SHELBURNE.

BURKE was interrupted in the last of his indignant contradictions of Shelburne's assertions about Barré's pension, by the Usher of the Black Rod summoning the Commons to the bar of the House of Lords. His Majesty, much to the new Prime Minister's relief, hastened to adjourn Parliament. Owing to the economical reforms Burke had just effected, the Jewel Office had been abolished; but as the Bill had only recently become law, no arrangement had been made for the conveyance of the Royal jewels to the robing-room. One great dignitary referred to another, and each and all declined to take the responsibility of acting. His Majesty might have been without his crown and sceptre, had not, as a last resource, the magistrates at Bow-street been applied to, and five able-bodied policemen been sent by them, to accompany two hackney-coaches, in which the illustrious symbols of the British monarchy were placed, and

escorted from the Tower, up the New Road, and down Portland-street, to Westminster. When the ceremony was over, the same dignified procession saw the precious relics once more safely deposited within the grey walls of the venerable fortress.\*

At this prorogation Burke and his friends were in a position he, with all his foresight, could have little anticipated. After three months of success, everything appeared to have changed. The leading members of the great party he had held together for sixteen years were in open dissension. The noble Marquis was gone. The Duke of Richmond, who, next to Lord Rockingham, had so long been Burke's most intimate political confidant, remained in office under Shelburne. Even Admiral Keppel thought the resignation of Burke and Fox premature, and, at least until he should see terminated the naval campaign he was then directing, declined to follow their example. With very different feelings from those which had generally attended him during the holidays, Burke, in the July of 1782, sought the quiet shades of Beaconsfield.

To the patriot it might indeed be some comfort that this autumn his country did not suffer all the national humiliation of former years. The combined fleets, on again approaching the coast, found no longer their victim passive. Lord Howe, with a small but effective naval force, was there to keep them in check. Yet the winds and waves appeared, even to the formal close of this American war, to combine against the haughty mistress of the seas. It was during this August that all people were appalled on learning that the Royal George, a crack ship of one hundred and eight guns, had gone down

\* Wraxall's Hist. Mem., vol. iii. p. 189.

while apparently safely anchored at Spithead, owing to the negligence of those who were careening her; and that with her, nearly a thousand persons, including the able and scientific Admiral Kempenfelt, had perished. Rodney's prizes, in their voyage from the West Indies, met with equal disaster. Some of the most valuable captures never reached the English shores; and that cherished trophy, the 'Ville de Paris,' disappeared in the mid-ocean, scarcely leaving the slightest recognizable vestige to tell what had been her fate.

These misfortunes began again to darken the shadow which Rodney's victory had dispelled. But all was once more joy and triumph, at another signal defeat of France and Spain before the walls of Gibraltar. Notwithstanding the protracted defence, at last it seemed that General Elliott and his intrepid band must inevitably surrender, and gratify the pride of French and Spanish foes, by lowering the English flag from what had become, by the fire of their artillery, literally only a barren rock. Floating batteries, supposed to be irresistible, were constructed with admirable scientific skill. Two French princes, the Duc de Bourbon and the Comte d'Artois, hastened to witness the expected triumph. The French General, De Crillon, the conqueror of Minorca, thought it more than likely that Gibraltar would not hold out other fourteen days. The hopes of the assailants were however again deceived. Red-hot balls, from the English ramparts, set on fire those mighty towers of destruction which had so long employed all the invention of the French engineers; and the climax of mortification and disgrace was reached in the month of October, when Lord Howe sailed into the harbour at the head of the Channel Fleet, and after relieving the garrison, slowly returned to the British shores,

bidding defiance, on their own coasts, to the navies of both France and Spain.

As long as it seemed possible to subdue Gibraltar, the Bourbon Powers were not likely to be very earnest in agreeing to terms of peace. On being, however, foiled in all their endeavours, negotiations had a much better prospect of success. The United States again ostensibly refused to treat separately with England; but the American Commissioners at Paris were becoming somewhat impatient at the delays of the French Court; and a Treaty, called Provisional because it was only to be formally concluded on the completion of the treaties with France and Spain, was in November satisfactorily settled between the English and American Plenipotentiaries. The other negotiations were being so far advanced. Yet it was on a peace that all Shelburne's hopes of Ministerial existence depended. He had scarcely made any attempt to widen the basis on which his Government stood; and few men but himself believed that, without enlisting some further support, he could long maintain himself in power.

Parliament stood adjourned until the twenty-sixth of November. As the day drew near, an extraordinary letter from one of the Secretaries of State to the Lord Mayor, notified that the Houses would be still further prorogued until the fifth of December, in the confident expectation that, by the appointed day, a satisfactory peace would be concluded.

The announcement was premature. His Majesty, when Parliament met, could only inform the Lords and Commons that the Provisional Treaty between England and the United States was signed, and express his confident expectations that a general peace would soon be con-

cluded. Of all the remarkable speeches ever delivered from the Throne, this, which Lord Shelburne composed for his Sovereign, was one of the most curious. It was of the length of a message of an American President in our time, or of the orations in which his Gracious Majesty James I. delighted to lecture his English Parliament; and the manner and matter of the Royal manifesto were quite as remarkable as its prolixity. In conceding American Independence, George III. was made to say, that he sacrificed every consideration of his own to the wishes and opinions of his people; and that it was his humble and earnest prayer to Almighty God, that he would avert from America the calamities which experience had shown to be inevitable from the loss of monarchy. He announced various measures of political and economical reform with much unusual detail, and as unusually declared, that the fixed object of his heart was to make the general good and the true spirit of the Constitution the invariable rule of his conduct. The advantages of such a government, his Majesty in conclusion reminded the two Estates, depended on their temper, their wisdom, and their disinterestedness individually and collectively; and making himself the interpreter of the popular sentiment, he concluded by saying, "My people expect these qualifications of you, and I call for them."

After the Address had been moved and seconded in the Commons, Fox stood up, and entered at once into the reasons of his resignation. His speech embraced all the events of the autumn, and was delivered with great animation, from the Opposition benches. He was followed by Pitt, who appeared then for the first time as Leader of that House over which he was for a quarter of a century to display so powerful an ascendancy.

Burke spoke the last in the debate. He began his speech by complimenting the youthful Chancellor of the Exchequer, in whose honour he declared that he implicitly confided. But he vehemently attacked the Royal Speech, as disingenuous, insincere, and absurd. Surely nothing, he said, could be more ungracious, than, in recognizing the Independence of America, to represent the Sovereign as yielding, not to necessity, but to the advice of Parliament. It was to make him say, that he did it against wisdom, against good sense, against necessity, against policy, in constrained obedience to the advice of an ill-judging House of Commons. Then his Majesty fell upon his knees to pray that his late subjects, who were never designed by Heaven for monarchy, who were in their natures adverse to monarchy, and who never had any other than the smell of monarchy at the distance of three thousand miles, might not suffer inevitable evils from the loss of monarchy. What was this but talking in a whimpering style of affected and unmeaning piety, which must show to the Americans that some persons could never be cured of their follies, or brought to think and act like men? The orator alluded to several other topics which had been mentioned in the Speech or stated in the debate; and then concluded by asserting that, though he disapproved of much that had come from the Throne, and reserved himself full power to consider the Provisional Treaty when it should be laid on the table of the House, he would not disturb the harmony of the day by moving an amendment.\*

The Address was carried without any overt act of hostility to the Government. Everything on the first day had passed off much better than the Minister had

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxiii. p. 261. Burke's Collected Speeches, vol. ii. p. 368.

any reason to expect. By a plain and straightforward policy, and by language at once sincere and unambiguous, the ground of this powerful Opposition, even with their able and experienced leaders, might have been cut from beneath their feet.

Unfortunately it was not in Lord Shelburne's nature to act in that bold, direct, and steady manner which encourages friends and disarms adversaries. While Pitt and his colleagues in the Commons were declaring that they considered the acknowledgment of Colonial Independence in the Provisional Treaty to be absolute, the Prime Minister, in the Lords, was hesitatingly and equivocatingly arguing that this recognition was entirely dependent on the conclusion of the treaties with France and Spain.

The debate on the Speech was therefore renewed the next day in the Commons, when the report was brought up, and the Opposition grew much more bitter in their attacks than they had been on the previous evening.

Burke led the way. He again praised the young Chancellor of the Exchequer, but denounced the Speech from the Throne as a farrago of nonsense and hypocrisies. His suspicions of yesterday were confirmed by what had passed in another place. Taking each passage of the Speech separately into consideration, he commented upon it in such a strain of wit, argument, and satire, that, it is recorded, the House was kept in one continuous burst of laughter.\* An allusion to the youth of the Leader of the House of Commons seemed so ludicrous, that even the seriousness of the Ministerial benches was also completely put to flight. Quoting once more the gratuitous assertion that the general good and the true spirit of the Constitution would ever be the invariable

\* Collected Speeches, vol. ii. p. 372.

rule of his Majesty's conduct, "Oh," exclaimed Burke, "the noble discovery! O wise Ministers! 'Dii tibi tonsorem donent,'—to all except one, who has no occasion for such a practitioner."\* At length, folding up the Speech, which he had held in his hand, and commented upon for an hour and a half, he apologized for having preached so long a sermon, but declared that he did not deserve the name of Parson Spintext, as he had been preaching from the longest text ever known, and a long text rendered a long comment indispensable.†

Pitt rose to reply. Assuming all that dignified gravity which became so habitual to him, he affected to rebuke Burke for indulging in gay effusions of fancy, and intemperate sallies of wit, at a time when the circumstances of the country demanded the gravest attention of Parliament. The young Minister, almost a minor, in a majestic attitude and sonorous tones, admonishing, for what he represented as unseasonable levity, his father's foe and the great champion of the Rockingham party, whose hair was now becoming grey, and every line of whose face bore witness to many years of earnest meditation and anxious thought, formed surely a curious scene. It was, however, ominous of the time then rapidly approaching, when Burke's brilliant intellectual powers, partly even from their very superiority, would be considered misplaced and out of date, by the younger generation who were engaged, as interested partisans, in contemplating the coarser rivalry of Fox and Pitt for the English government. The natural conditions were to be reversed: even in the Senate youth was to have more weight than age, intrepid inexperience than the most enlarged wisdom, Parliamentary routine than political philosophy.

\* Wrexall's Hist. Mem., vol. iii. p. 220. † Parl. Hist., vol. xxiii. p. 266.



Pitt concluded by telling Burke, with some little arrogance, that the imputations he had thrown out respecting the insincerity of Ministers in acknowledging American Independence, had his scorn and contempt. Fox defended Burke. Burke in conclusion observed, that nothing his young adversary might say would at least be received by him with scorn and contempt.\*

Pitt's position, though elevated, was then far from enviable. However circumstances might influence his conduct, in his heart he agreed with Burke and distrusted Shelburne. The alleged difference of the Prime Minister with his colleagues on the interpretation of the Provisional Treaty really existed, and the Earl, after the debate on the Address, was obliged to postpone a Cabinet Council, from a reluctance to face Pitt and other Ministers whose language, in respect to the Treaty, he had directly contradicted.† This disagreement of the Ministers, Burke compared to the strange, and, as he had hitherto thought, imaginary, serpent with two heads, the Amphisbæna, which uttered so opposite a language from the different extremities, that the nation, between them, became quite confounded.‡

The Opposition professed the greatest distrust. From some words which had fallen from the supporters of the Government, it was inferred that Gibraltar was to be surrendered as one of the conditions of peace. But from the glorious defence of Elliott, this key to the Mediterranean had become especially dear to the nation. Burke on the Address had declared it to be not merely a post

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxiii. p. 278.

† Letter of Mr. W. W. Grenville to Lord Temple, Dec. 13th, 1782. *Memoirs of the Courts and Cabinets of George III.*, by the Duke of Buckingham, vol. i. p. 89.

‡ Parl. Hist., vol. xxiii. p. 286. *Wraxall's Hist. Mem.*, vol. iii. p. 230.

of pride but a post of power, of connection, and of commerce, a post invaluable because impregnable. Yet this noble acquisition, so gallantly won in former days, and so nobly defended in that age by Elliott, Lord Shelburne was willing to negotiate away. The House of Commons unexpectedly interfered. On the proposal of a vote of thanks to General Elliott, an addition was moved, declaring Gibraltar the most valuable and important fortress of all our foreign possessions. Burke earnestly exhorted Members to pass the amendment, in order to put a stop to any question of such a cession. The feeling of the House was so strong that Ministers were fain to accept this emphatic declaration. An abstract of the debate was made by a person stationed in the gallery, and this report was sent by Lord Shelburne the next morning to Paris, that it might be laid at once before the French and Spanish Ministers, to show them that all thoughts of making this surrender, whatever might be the equivalent proposed, must at once be abandoned. It is therefore owing to the independent and patriotic portion of the House of Commons, and not to the wisdom and spirit of a British Cabinet, that Gibraltar still remains part of the British dominions. What combined Europe never could take by force of arms, a callous diplomacy would have tamely given up.\*

This success induced Fox and his friends to bring forward a motion for the production of the Provisional Treaty with the Colonies ; but as they were unsupported by the other section in Opposition, the Government obtained a very decisive majority. The defeat, just before Parliament adjourned for the Christmas holidays, intimated unequivocally that the Rockinghams, as they now

\* See Wraxall's Hist. Mem., vol. iii. p. 238.

ostentatiously called themselves, in contradistinction to the followers of Lord Shelburne, had not power to force their way alone into office, and that by their imprudences and errors, Lord North had become the arbiter of the scene. The events of this short session had however as clearly shown that the Administration could not long continue on its own narrow foundation. It was confidently anticipated that, before the Houses met again, an agreement would be settled between Shelburne and North.

This was evidently the most natural arrangement. Shelburne ruled as much by Royal favour as North had done; he was supported by many of the former champions of the prerogative; and he avowedly consented with much reluctance to the independence of America. In principle therefore there could be but little difference between the two statesmen. But Pitt, who was indispensable to Shelburne, would not listen to any union with the man who had carried on the American war. He declared that himself and Lord North could not sit in the same Cabinet; and in acting on such a determination, the young Chancellor of the Exchequer showed a wise estimate of public opinion.

It would have been well for Burke had he and Fox shown equal prudence. Nothing was, however, settled when Parliament again met, on the twenty-first of January, 1783. But it was known that the terms of a general peace had been arranged, and relying upon this great work, the Prime Minister confidently trusted in the continuance of his power. Yet Keppel, professing to dislike the articles, resigned. The Duke of Richmond was discontented. It was clear to every one but Shelburne himself, that his Ministry was established on no solid materials, and must inevitably fall before a hostile majority in the House of Commons.

On the twenty-seventh the preliminaries were laid upon the table. Indications of the gathering storm immediately showed themselves. Those preliminaries were to be taken into consideration on the seventeenth of February; and as time passed on, the opposition which the Government would have to encounter assumed every day a more formidable appearance. By making advantageous propositions to Lord North, there can be little doubt that he and his large party of followers might have been induced to enlist in the ranks of the Ministry. Not only, however, did Pitt's scruples interfere with such an arrangement, but his colleagues evidently supposed that Lord North was at their mercy, and must at length adopt any course they might choose to dictate. They therefore insisted that he should give an earnest of his adhesion to their cause by supporting the Peace, before any of his friends were provided for; that only after this vote of approbation had been obtained could he be admitted to any place under the Government; and that even then he was to content himself with some dignified and lucrative office out of the Cabinet, and by no means to aspire to any share of Ministerial power. Lord North's disposition was not sensitive. But the off-hand manner in which these proposals were thrown out, only made them appear more insulting to a statesman who had so long held the first place in the Government.

Some of his nearest friends were at the same time busily endeavouring to bring about an understanding between him and Fox. It was not a difficult undertaking. Enmity to Lord Shelburne had for the moment overcome every other feeling in the breasts of the Rockingham leaders. They were as dictatorial in their answers to all offers for joining the Government as the Ministers were to Lord North. Pitt called on Fox, with

the consent of the King, and requested to know on what terms he and his party would enter again into office. The summary retirement of Lord Shelburne, and the placing of the Treasury in the hands of the Duke of Portland, were the only conditions to which Fox would listen; and they were unquestionably such as Pitt could not honourably entertain.

As both parties in Opposition separately refused to join the Ministry on the terms proposed, their common discord became a bond of union. Lord North's son George, and Fox's friend The Hon. John Townshend, were the principal negotiators of the arrangement. Then followed private meetings between the two aspiring statesmen. At last, early on the morning of the seventeenth of February, after many hours spent in consultation, it was determined that the two parties, in the debate of that day, should act together in condemning the Peace, and, if possible, in overthrowing the Government.\*

Thus was brought about that celebrated combination of parties, known preeminently as the Coalition. No candid person who has hitherto followed the career of Burke, from the time he became an active political leader, on the formation of the first Rockingham Ministry, can refrain from admitting that the course of himself and his friends, whether right or wrong, was singularly consistent and intelligible. But, notwithstanding the apologies which have been made for this union with Lord North in 1783, it is impossible not to admit, that from this period, perhaps even from the death of the late Marquis eight months before, the public conduct of Fox and

\* See the Letters of Lord John Townshend to Lord Holland, in Fox's Memorials and Correspondence, vol. ii. pp. 21 and 24.

Burke scarcely recommends itself for such complete and unhesitating approbation. I unreservedly acknowledge—and it is the first occasion relating to any important act of Burke about which I am compelled to make such an admission—that the coalition with Lord North appears, and has ever appeared, to me absolutely indefensible.

Coalitions, in the abstract, and under certain circumstances, may be perfectly justifiable. The Revolution of 1688 was itself brought about by a coalition. Great ministries since that time have been formed by statesmen who have agreed to sink minor differences in order to form a strong Government to attain some highly national object. The coalition with Lord North certainly originated in no such patriotic motive; neither was it, as it has been called, a strong Government. Whatever might be its numbers on a division in the Commons, no Government could really be considered strong, which, from its formation, was disapproved by the most moderate and respectable politicians of the time, and which shocked the general sentiment of the people. But of all defences of the Coalition, perhaps the worst is that which alleged the American war to be the only difference between North and Fox, and, that at its termination there was no obstacle to prevent them from acting together. This argument was used by Fox himself; and it was, of course, frequently repeated by the late Lord Holland, who, to render it more plausible, even sought, in his Memorials of Fox, to show that even during the American war, when his uncle was threatening Lord North with impeachment, and declaring that if he united with him he would consent to be considered infamous, there was really no diametrical difference of principle between the Whig party of which Fox became the organ, and the Tories and King's friends of whom Lord North had so

long been the ostensible chief. If true, this excuse would only prove that parties and statesmen, and especially Fox and North, had no principles at all. It is, however, in every respect false. From the time when Lord North became the Leader of the House of Commons in 1768, during the Duke of Grafton's administration, on the events of the Middlesex elections, the prosecutions of the printers for publishing the debates, all the questions of civil and religious liberty as they were agitated during fourteen years, and especially on the momentous subject of rendering Parliament independent of the influence of the Court and fully responsible to the representative portion of the Constitution, Lord North and the Rockingham party were obviously separated by the strongest line of demarcation that ever could divide politicians. If it were, however, to be asserted that Charles Fox individually had not taken, on these questions, so liberal and enlightened a view as Burke, and therefore was not so strongly pledged against Lord North, this would lead to a conclusion which those who boast that Fox was the greatest champion of freedom must find totally irreconcilable with their enthusiastic admiration.

On many points, it must be admitted that Fox had hitherto not taken so enlarged a view as Burke. For a long time therefore the admirers of the younger statesman sought to make Burke the great originator of the Coalition, and to blame him for all the calamities which flowed from that fertile spring of political evil. This charge however has also been abandoned. It is at last confessed that Burke acquiesced in the arrangement, but that he took little active part in carrying it into effect.\*

\* See Lord John Townshend's Letter to Lord Holland, in Fox's Memorials, vol. ii. p. 23.

This fact indeed in no respect exonerates him from heavy responsibility. He of all men ought to have seen that, between the politicians he had so long opposed, and the policy he had so long consistently advocated, there could be no honourable alliance. He of all men ought to have seen that, from the moment such men as Loughborough, Stormont, and North sat in a Cabinet with the friends of the late Marquis, the Rockingham party, as a party with explicit principles, and dependent on public approbation, must cease to exist. It is admitted that, had he set his face against this unnatural union, it could not have taken place. He did not oppose it. He even induced Lord Rockingham's devoted friends, who looked up to him for advice, to support it. On his head therefore as much as on any one's, nay, perhaps on more than that of any one else, must the sin of this coalition be visited. It placed him in a false position, from which he found it at length almost impossible to emancipate himself.

The very first object which the Coalition leaders undertook in common, was most significant of this false position. Burke and Fox had ever disapproved of the American war. They had powerfully argued that any peace would at any time be preferable to continuing such a ruinous contest. Yet they united with the men who had introduced the Boston Port Bill, the Massachusetts Charter Act, the Fishery Bill, and all the other fatal measures which produced the American war, to censure the terms of a treaty of peace which, whatever might be its defects, had at least the merit of effectually bringing the American war to a close.

The Address, thanking his Majesty for the preliminary and provisional articles, was couched in very moderate



language. It was moved by the Chancellor of the Exchequer's uncle, Mr. Thomas Pitt, and seconded by his enthusiastic friend William Wilberforce, who, with his mild and persuasive accents and earnest manner, notwithstanding his insignificant person, was gradually gaining the attention and respect of the House. Lord John Cavendish moved an amendment, which implied no more censure than the motion did approbation. As the representative of the old Rockingham party, of a generation of Whigs that was fast receding before the advancing tide of a younger and more energetic liberalism, as well as for his acknowledged honesty and manly integrity, Lord John was regularly selected by Fox to make those party motions which, coming from hands less unsullied, would not have seemed so patriotically pure. Lord North proposed another amendment, recommending the American loyalists to the attention of the Crown. But Lord North having been up all the previous night, settling the terms of his union with Fox, his eyes were even heavier than usual, and notwithstanding the loud reproaches from the Treasury Bench about the loss of America and the scandalous coalition, he retired to the gallery, stretched himself out on a bench, and slept throughout the greater part of the debate. Wraxall was however by his side, and having afterwards supplied him with some of the leading arguments urged against himself and his friends, the happy statesman delivered a powerful and witty speech, which, able in itself, appeared marvellous to those who had seen, a few minutes before, the fat and unwieldy orator fast asleep.\* The most bitter taunts on the new alliance came

\* Wraxall's Hist. Mem., vol. iii. p. 263. But Wraxall represents Lord North as speaking after Dundas, while it is clear from the Parlia-

from the shrewd and independent Powis. The Honourable Thomas Townshend, Secretary of State for the Home Department, defended the Peace in a speech worthy of a leading Minister ; and on that night was said to have fairly earned from Pitt that peerage which, as Viscount Sydney, he shortly afterwards received.\*

To him Burke replied. Mr. Thomas Pitt had observed that we had nothing to fear in the East Indies, since we had there a great statesman. This allusion was met by Burke, with a remark which showed that he was already meditating the impeachment of Hastings. "This great statesman," said he, "may yet be proved a great delinquent." He afterwards regretted the abandonment of the loyalists ; and this he might most consistently do ; for at the time of Cornwallis's surrender, he, of all the members of the Opposition, had earnestly pleaded their cause, and trembled at the fate which might be reserved for them. He concluded by answering the taunts of Powis about the Coalition ; and made great amusement, by pointing out Dundas, the great enemy of the Colonies and supporter of the American war, sitting on the Treasury Bench between Townshend and Pitt.†

The debate was long and acrimonious. Lord Shelburne found himself beaten in the House of Commons by sixteen ; even in the Lords, where Royal influence was more potent, he only obtained a bare majority ; and noble lords and honourable Members, after sitting at their Parliamentary posts throughout the cold February night, sat down to dinner with most voracious appetites at eight o'clock on the next morning.

mentary History that the Lord Advocate spoke long after Lord North (vol. xxiii. pp. 443 and 470).

\* Ibid., p. 265.

† Parl. Hist., vol. xxiii. p. 466.

The coalition was now cemented by victory. Resolutions directly censuring the provisional and preliminary treaties were proposed on the twenty-first, by Lord John Cavendish, when, notwithstanding a brilliant defence of the Peace by Pitt, the Government was again defeated.

This defeat was considered decisive. Two days afterwards Shelburne hastily and timidly retired from a position in which, as his supporters acknowledged, he was universally distrusted, and which, had he consulted his own honour, domestic comfort, and self-respect, he would, under the circumstances, never have occupied.

In the debate which really put an end to the Earl's political existence Burke took no part. During the five following weeks which intervened before the King could make up his mind to surrender to the Coalition, and which are known in political history as the Interregnum, he was far from active in support of the new combination. Only once, indeed, did he directly allude to the subject. On the last day of March, the Earl of Surrey proposed an address, earnestly requesting his Majesty to form an efficient Administration. Burke took that single opportunity of entering into a vindication of his Parliamentary conduct, in a manner which was considered very clear and manly. He had, he said, always acted, and he trusted he always should act, with the House of Cavendish. He hoped that the day would come when they who railed so bitterly against him, because he joined the Coalition, would see that they were in error. Had he not differed even with Fox on such points as the Middlesex election, and a reform of Parliament; and yet had those differences prevented their acting heartily together on the leading political questions? Why, therefore, should he be prevented from uniting with other

men to form a Government on a broad and settled foundation ?\*

This defence seems, indeed, far from conclusive. It is rather in the nature of a hesitating apology for acknowledged error, than a triumphant refutation of imputed inconsistency. The subsequent history of himself and Fox showed that even their long and friendly alliance was, from the contrasts in their character, not established on any secure foundation ; and in the days of their closest intimacy, some subject of dissension, showing the hollowness of their union, was inveterately breaking out.

At this very time, a measure, called Williams's Divorce Bill, was before Parliament. As the injured husband had not lived with his wife for years, and it had been clearly proved in evidence that he could not be the father of the children that had been born during their separation, a clause was introduced into the Bill by Lord Ashburton, declaring that those children should not be entitled to enjoy any share of Mr. Williams's property until they proved their legitimacy. Fox strongly denounced this regulation, as subversive of every principle of justice, and cruel in the extreme to innocent children, who were summarily bastardized by Act of Parliament, without being heard in their defence. Burke rose immediately after Fox, and as earnestly supported the clause. He argued that it was right to free Mr. Williams by law from any liability to support the offspring of an adulterous connection ; entered into an abstruse and curious disquisition on the relations of husbands and wives, from the days of the Romans ; and, in maintaining the justice and expediency of divorce, observed, in words which

\* Collected Speeches, vol. ii. p. 384.

were considered to be directly levelled at Fox, that the objections to such Bills generally sprung from bachelors, men who were strangers to the nice feelings of husbands. Fox replied, with warmth, that no other person in the kingdom would maintain the unqualified opinions his honourable friend had avowed. The House was counted out at the moment when the two friends were about to proceed into opposite lobbies; and the contest in which they both had so pertinaciously engaged was abruptly terminated by an adjournment.\*

Before it could be again revived, Burke and Fox were once more in office together. The long interregnum, during which all the business of the nation was suspended, at last came to an end. Since the middle of March, little but the Royal consent had been wanting to the completion of a new Government; and on the second of April it was publicly announced that the Duke of Portland had been appointed First Lord of the Treasury, and that Charles Fox and Lord North had accepted the Seals as the two Secretaries of State. The Coalition Ministry was at last in power; from the Parliamentary strength at the command of the two leaders, this ill-omened Government seemed unassailable; and with its destiny Burke's fortunes were inseparably linked.

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxiii. p. 710-715. Burke's Collected Speeches, vol. ii. p. 386.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

1783-1784.

## AGAIN PAYMASTER.

THE auspices under which the Coalition Ministry entered office, were very different from those which had greeted the establishment of the second Rockingham Ministry. Only twelve months had elapsed since that period, only nine months had elapsed since the Marquis's death, and yet the political position of his friends, with Fox and Burke at their head, had been almost entirely reversed. They came into power with the very Minister whom they had then, amid the exultation of the nation, expelled from office and threatened with impeachment. They came into power on a vote condemning the termination of the war which had been the constant object of their reprobation. They came into power with some of their best and most attached friends deprecating their union with Lord North, and looking with many forebodings to the prospects of the Ministry.

Among these was Sir Charles Turner. Turner had accepted a baronetcy, at the earnest request of Lord Rockingham, in the preceding year, not because, as he declared, he wanted any honours, but only to demonstrate his enthusiastic adhesion to a patriotic Ministry. His health was fast declining, and within a very few months from this time he sank into his grave. His

beautiful seat at Kirkleatham, near the mouth of the Tees, on the north-eastern part of the Yorkshire coast, still abounds in evidence of the philanthropy and public spirit of himself and of his grandfather, who realized in his own person the visions of Whittington, became Lord Mayor of London, retired to his native place, erected a noble hospital for unprotected infancy and friendless old-age, lent large sums of money to William III., and always kept with especial reverence the day on which the Deliverer landed at Torbay. Charles Turner had all the essential characteristics of his ancestor. This simple-minded country gentleman perceived the inevitable consequences to which great orators and statesmen were blind. "The Coalition," said he, "has astonished the whole nation, and no individual more than myself. I am sorry for it, as my worthy friend Charles has materially injured himself by it. He has lost much of his popularity. The noble lord with whom he has coalesced is undoubtedly the best of men, considered as a private character, but as a Minister he has been most unfortunate. I reprobate the alliance between them. It will turn out ill, and never answer the expectations of its authors." \*

Sir George Savile, with more reserve, expressed similar apprehensions. Between him and Turner there were curious coincidences, and many points of resemblance. Savile had a more cultivated mind, a gentler manner, a subtler perception, a more refined and delicate spirit. His philanthropy was, however, not greater. His attachment to the cause of civil and religious liberty was not more ardent nor more uncompromising. Like Turner, he was unmarried, and both their estates descended in consequence, either directly or not remotely, to other

\* Wraxall's Hist. Mem., vol. iii. p. 330.

names. Like Turner, he was suffering from a severe indisposition, which carried him off within a few weeks of the time when his ruder, but not less noble, political associate expired. In this century, since liberal principles have again become fashionable, there have been many respectable and worthy advocates of freedom: but there have been none more respectable, none more worthy, than Burke's two friends, in a period less favourable to political improvement, Sir George Savile and Sir Charles Turner.

The misgivings of such men ought to have warned the Ministers. Fox himself confessed that nothing but success could justify this extraordinary union: but he seemed from the first scarcely conscious of the fatal results to himself and the party inevitable from a decided failure. There was some hissing when he appeared on the hustings at Westminster; Lord John Cavendish was however re-elected without opposition at York; and Burke was of course, without any trouble, again returned for Malton, consequent on his once more being appointed Paymaster of the Forces.

Whatever sacrifices of feeling and of principle this junction with his political enemies may have occasioned to him, it was attended with no further gain in his political position or worldly fortune. He had been Paymaster of the Forces under Lord Rockingham: Paymaster of the Forces he remained under the high officials of the Coalition. The readiness with which he returned to the Pay Office has been made a reproach to him, as though he were too eager to enjoy the profits of the place:\* but in our day it will appear that his disinterestedness in sinking his personal pretensions, and

\* Wraxall's Hist. Mem., vol. iii.



accepting whatever was allotted to him, was his most remarkable feature on the rare occasions when power was placed at the disposal of those to whom his genius had long been the instructor, the boast, and the delight. Many years before, he had written, in his elaborate defence of himself against Dr. Markham's accusations, "If ever things should stand in such a situation as to entitle me to look to office, it is my friends who must discover the rank I hold in Parliament; I never shall explain it."\* He seems scrupulously to have acted on this resolution. But his friends were far from eager in making the discovery. If Fox were now the first man in the party, Burke was, and had been for a long period, as unquestionably the second; yet the leadership of the House of Commons and the virtual direction of the whole Government were given as a matter of course to Fox, while the offer of a seat in the Cabinet was never once made to Burke.

The omission was perhaps more excusable during the preceding year, because places were to be found for all the great personages in opposition, and the Cabinet was composed of the then unusually large number of eleven. But seven Ministers made up the whole council of the Coalition. And for such a powerful Government as it has been represented, with the House of Commons completely subservient to its purposes, and the King manacled at its feet, the Coalition Cabinet was anything rather than pre-eminent in official experience and political ability. Lord John Cavendish would have willingly left to some one else the Chancellorship of the Exchequer; Keppel made no pretensions to statesmanship, though he returned to the Admiralty; Lord Stormont was a high

\* Correspondence, vol. i. p. 311.

Tory, but of no high talent; Lord Carlisle, an accomplished nobleman, whose course during the political events of the last two years had been strangely vacillating. Yet these men, with Fox, North, and the Duke of Portland, formed the whole Cabinet. The exclusion of Burke from this inner Ministerial circle appears only the more absurd when it is remembered, that being imperatively summoned to legislate for India, they were to stand or fall by their India measure, and that on the subject of India, Burke knew more than all the members of the Cabinet put together.

Still his influence was very great. He has been accused of actually himself making the Prime Minister, that he might govern the whole country through the ducal image he covertly set up.

When the Duke of Portland was proposed as the nominal leader of the party, the followers of Lord Shelburne raised a shout of derision against the Whigs for presuming to appoint such a man as their chief, and compelling the Sovereign to accept him as Prime Minister. As, however, it was understood that neither Fox nor Burke was to be considered a candidate for the Treasury, it necessarily followed that they should select from their own party a respectable nobleman in whom they had implicit confidence, and place him in that post which they themselves did not pretend to occupy.

No man had been more faithful to the Rockingham cause than the Duke of Portland. With the Marquis he had retired from Court, when the King and his advisers sought to discredit the great Whig confederacy in the earlier years of the reign; and so steadily indeed had he kept himself aloof, that he was accused of living in ducal dudgeon at Welbeck. As the party gathered strength

with the misfortunes of the American war, the Duke again gradually came forth from his obscurity and took a prominent part in support of his old friends. He was by marriage closely allied with the House of Devonshire. His government of Ireland during the preceding year had been eminently successful. Burke had long considered him one of the most honest men in the country; and he delighted to repeat an observation this nobleman once made to him about political connections. "The only people," said his Grace, "who, according to my experience, disclaim parties, are persons conscious of belonging to a party of which they are ashamed." As a political leader he had not the gentle suavity and conciliatory power of Lord Rockingham. His origin was Dutch, and like his great ancestor the friend of King William, he was reserved, ungraceful, and apparently unpolished. But he was thoroughly sincere. He even managed to blend an unhesitating devotion to his principles with a personal respect to the King, which rendered him less obnoxious at St. James's than Fox or Lord Rockingham ever were; and consequently, of all the public men opposed to the prejudices of George III., the Duke of Portland is said to have received the fewest marks of his Majesty's displeasure.\* Such was the man who, without shining talents or much political experience, was by Burke and Fox at this time made Prime Minister, who nearly a quarter of a century afterwards was made Prime Minister again, and who remained throughout a long and eventful period the acknowledged chief of the Whig aristocracy.

On the ninth of April, the new Ministers, with the

\* *Memoirs and Correspondence of Fox*, vol. ii. p. 68. Letter from Burke to Shackleton, *Correspondence*, vol. ii. p. 277.

Duke of Portland at their head, appeared for the first time in their places. The extraordinary spectacle of Lord North sitting between Fox and Burke on the Treasury Bench, caused as novel an excitement as had been occasioned in the same month of the preceding year, when the Rockingham section of politicians, after having been nearly sixteen years in opposition, took their seats again on the Ministerial side of the House, as the authorized agents of the Crown.

Their first business was to negotiate a loan of twelve millions. It was not obtained on the most satisfactory terms. Pitt attacked the bargain in the strongest language; but Fox and North came to the rescue of Lord John Cavendish; and it was with some reason retorted on the young leader of the Opposition, that owing to the manner in which all the functions of Government had been suspended for more than five weeks, neither time nor choice was left to the new Ministers in obtaining an immediate advance of money for the pressing necessities of the State.

The sudden union of men who had so long been opposed to each other afforded however to Pitt many advantages as an assailant. He hastened to bring forward another motion for Parliamentary reform, which, whatever might be its reception, could not but exhibit the two portions of the Ministry in open disagreement. On the appointed day an unusually large number of Members was present. The gallery was thronged with strangers. Pitt brought forward a specific plan of reform, analogous to what his father had formerly intimated, to increase the representation of the counties by an addition to the number of the knights of the shire and also to the number of the metropolitan Members. The motion was opposed

by Lord North ; it was supported by Fox ; the majority against it was overwhelming. After Fox had spoken, Burke rose, evidently with the intention of replying to his friend's arguments ; but many Members, satisfied with what they had heard, began to leave the House, and made much noise as they crowded to the door. On witnessing such indications of disrespect, Burke hastily resumed his seat without saying a word, but with marks of great indignation depicted on his countenance.\*

In truth he was ill at ease. Whoever might reap the benefits from the Coalition, no person felt the evil effects of it more than Burke. He had in all addresses assumed so high and ethical a tone ; he had ever been so steadfast in his opposition to the American war and to Lord North ; he had so unweariedly struggled against the corruptions and misdeeds of his time, and so earnestly laboured in the cause of economical reform, that what in most other men would have passed without observation, and as a matter of course, appeared in him unparalleled inconsistency and the most shameless apostacy. It was of no avail for him to answer as he did, that all the strongholds of Government were held by the friends of the late Lord Rockingham, and that on their principles, and on their principles only, would the Administration be conducted. This declaration was most true ; but, in his case, it was not thought a sufficient justification. During his long warfare in the cause of peace and freedom, he had made many enemies, who, seeing the disadvantages in which he had placed himself by the Coalition, delighted to torture a noble and susceptible spirit. The consequences were most painful to himself. His temper grew every day more irritable, and his resentment more

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxiii. p. 864. Wraxall's Hist. Mem., vol. iii. p. 412.

violent in its expression, until he left himself helplessly naked to all the envenomed darts of his inveterate adversaries.

Two clerks of the Pay Office, Powell and Bembridge, had been dismissed by his predecessor, Colonel Barré, for malversation. Powell was a cashier, who had been protected by Fox's father, Lord Holland; and it was for some irregularities in passing the accounts of this nobleman, by which the public was thought to be defrauded of forty-six thousand pounds, that this clerk and the accountant Bembridge were dismissed from the service, and both civil and criminal proceedings meditated against them as delinquents. Thus matters stood with respect to the two men when Burke returned to office. They had hitherto borne good characters, and they had rendered him essential service in his endeavours to reform his department. Believing in their innocence, and thinking that when they were about to be tried the mere dismissal would be considered a strong presumption of guilt, he summarily reversed Colonel Barré's act, and restored the two clerks to their situations.

The impending prosecution having been mentioned in the House of Commons, Pitt declared that the restoration of Powell and Bembridge reflected invidiously on the authors of their dismissal. Burke took upon himself the whole responsibility. One of Pitt's supporters declared that he could not but regard the reinstatement of the two men as a gross and daring insult to the public. At those words Burke quite lost his temper, and, again springing up from the Treasury Bench, exclaimed, "It is a gross and daring——." The sentence was never completed. Fox and Sheridan, fearing lest the Paymaster might in his passion make some intemperate declaration,

seized him by his coat-tails, pulled him into his seat, and held him in it by main force. The House was in a most violent mood. Fox rose, and while admitting that he was only informed by Burke of the restoration as he was going into the Royal closet, after it had been effected, yet earnestly defended his friend, and by persuasive and moderate language attempted to soothe the ferment that had so unexpectedly arisen. His interposition was effectual. For that evening the discussion went no further; but after what had occurred, it was evident the subject would not be allowed to rest.\*

Nearly three weeks afterwards it was again revived. Lord Newhaven moved to discharge an order for the Treasury minute suspending Powell and Bembridge, on the ground that the prosecution having been begun in the superior Courts, it would not be proper to continue the inquiry in the House of Commons. Pitt strongly opposed the motion. Fox maintained that the only object of those who wished to see the papers produced was to inflict a censure on the Paymaster. Burke apologized for the warmth he had exhibited when the question had formerly been introduced. His excitement arose, he said, entirely from the high respect he had for the House: a respect so high that he could not sit quiet under the imputation of having deserved its censure. For the act itself, he however could make no apology. He felt a real sunshine of content in his soul. It had ever been his object to pity and protect the unfortunate, as long as they were only unfortunate; and these two men having been committed to his protection by Divine Providence, he felt that, on the belief of their innocence, and lest punishment should precede conviction, he had

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxiii. p. 801.

only done his duty in restoring them to their offices. He read a letter from himself to Powell, telling him that he could only retain his situation on the event of the accusations being disproved ; and after depicting with much pathos the appearance of the grey-haired old man, whom he had seen that day distracted with grief and on the verge of insanity, from the obloquy to which he was exposed, Burke declared that he had been so deeply affected at the harrowing spectacle, as to be scarcely able to come down to the House.

This defence was not adapted to minds heated by party rancour, and eager to censure a political opponent. It was considered to set at nought all the ordinary rules of human conduct. Politicians of the Dundas stamp gravely shook their heads, and intimated that if Burke was not corrupt, his condition must be still more lamentable. They whispered about that he was actually mad.\*

Being determined to bait him to the utmost, his opponents brought the matter for the third time before the House. Burke, in reply, made a pathetic, brilliant, and discursive speech. Comparing his assailants to Indian savages, who roasted their prisoners alive, he took God to witness, that, in restoring Powell and Bembridge to their offices, he was only actuated by motives of justice. He would, however, bow to the respectable minority, including, he was convinced, many gentlemen who would much rather have voted with him than against him, if they had not thought him in the wrong. He entered into a defence of his own political career, and though frequently interrupted by place-hunters, whose emoluments he had

\* See Walpole's Journal in the Memorials and Correspondence of Fox, vol. ii. p. 79.



curtailed by his Bill of Reform, succeeded in making a very effective justification. He was however once more compelled to rise and declare that Powell had resigned, and that Bembridge had sent in an offer of resignation. This offer Fox, on seeing the temper of the House, advised Burke to accept. The Paymaster sullenly acquiesced, but declared at the same time that he would not be responsible for the consequences.\*

Some of those consequences were more serious than interested partisans had contemplated. When Burke alluded with so much vehemence to Powell's mental distress, many of his hearers only thought that he was making a pathetic appeal to their feelings. The mind of the accused cashier, however, gradually sank under his afflictions, and a few days after this last debate he cut his throat with a razor. Burke was so deeply affected at this tragical catastrophe, that when the question of Bembridge's dismissal was again revived, he refused to return any answer to his persecutors.

Bembridge was however publicly tried, convicted, and sentenced to a fine of two thousand six hundred pounds, and imprisonment in the King's Bench for six months.† Judged therefore after the event, Burke's conduct on the occasion has been represented as that of a man shielding two criminals from justice. No person, however, has ever supposed that he was not influenced by the purest humanity. He believed the men innocent, and, at the expense of much obloquy to himself, threw over them his official shield. Rigby and Lord North, who had also been in the Pay Office, and knew Powell and Bembridge well, both appeared with Burke on the

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxiii. p. 911-923.

† Chronicle of the Annual Register for 1783, p. 221.

Bench at the trial, and gave the most unhesitating testimony to the integrity of Bembridge's character.\*

The day immediately following that on which this business terminated in Parliament, Burke's enemies suddenly attacked him from another quarter. A Bill amending and explaining his Pay Office Act of the last session arrived at the third reading. As soon as the motion had been read from the Chair, a Member rose from the opposite side of the House, and accused him of having, after the Bill had passed through Committee, gone into the engrossing-room and expunged three clauses, and altered a fourth, at his own will and pleasure. The Speaker was appealed to in confirmation of this extraordinary statement. He gave a very different account of the proceeding. No private alterations had been made in the Bill. Each clause had been publicly put from the Chair, but, in the belief that all sides were agreed, in so low a voice that only Members near the Speaker heard the questions determined. Burke confirmed this statement, and his vindication was complete. But Pitt was not satisfied. Loftily rebuking the Coalition, and warning them how they used, what he termed, their ill-gotten power, he, notwithstanding the scorn of Fox and the wit of Lord North, insisted that the expunged clauses should be again brought up. The first of them being put by the Speaker, it was negatived by a considerable majority. The Bill was then read a third time and passed; and Burke was allowed to rest from the fierce attacks he had successively undergone.†

Between him and Pitt there seemed something more than ordinary political hostility. Pitt brought in a Bill

\* Wraxall's Hist. Mem., vol. iii. p. 431.

† See Parl. Hist., vol. xxiii. p. 988-93.

to prevent abuses, and establish certain economical regulations in the public offices. Burke opposed it as unnecessary, petty, teasing, and ineffectual; like the Royal speech with which the Shelburne Ministry opened the session, it was a mere theoretical reform, while the conduct of its authors was full of practical abuse and criminality. Pitt bitterly retorted, that the Paymaster knew best whether plans of theoretical reform, and the perpetration of practical abuses in office, did or did not centre in the same person.\*

During the Coalition Ministry, indeed, there was little courtesy between the Ministers on the Treasury Bench and their opponents on the other side of the House. The most angry reproaches and the most vehement vituperation characterize the speeches of the leading statesmen who, on sacrificing the moral distinctions of political parties, appear to have degenerated into mere intellectual gladiators. It was a time of factious fury, of deadly hatred: by common accord, the laws which generally regulate political warfare were suspended: no mercy was shown in a struggle on which the fortunes of ambitious adversaries, and the very existence of their parties, were obviously staked.

Pitt, supported by his bold, impetuous, and republican brother-in-law, Lord Mahon, strongly condemned Lord John Cavendish's budget. Lord John himself, though the most respectable of men, was no match for such an opponent. After stating, without ornament or oratorical power, his ways and means, the Chancellor of the Exchequer left his cause in the hands of his colleagues, Fox and North, and retired behind the Speaker's chair,

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxiii. p. 947.

whence he was seen peeping out as each Member rose to assail or to defend his financial plan.\*

Another pecuniary question threatened more serious consequences. The eldest son of George III. had grown up to be a young man of twenty years of age, with a fine person, pleasing manners, and, as was supposed, many virtues. According to the hereditary tendency which Lord Carteret, from his experience, ascribed to the Brunswick family, of quarrelling among themselves, the heir-apparent was on bad terms with his father, called himself a Whig, and diligently attended Fox's morning levees in St. James's-street, where, with his dirty linen dressing-gown thrown open, his black bristly breast quite exposed, and his bushy hair untouched by brush or comb, the orator expounded his politics for the benefit of his admiring disciples of Brookes' Club and the House of Commons.†

As the period of the Prince's minority was about to expire, it became necessary to find him a regular income to support his household establishment. Fox and the Duke of Portland considered a hundred thousand pounds a year not more than sufficient. Lord John Cavendish thought half of this sum fully adequate for all his Royal Highness's reasonable expenses. The King, in addition to his many political enmities, feeling strongly the pangs of parental jealousy, and hating Fox even more keenly than ever for having, as his Majesty supposed, alienated from himself the affections of his son, would not consent to the proposal of the larger amount. Fox was prepared to resign office on this most invidious

\* Wraxall's Hist. Mem., vol. iii. p. 446.

† See Walpole's Journal, March 5, 1783. Fox's Memorials and Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 45.

of all questions. He believed, in the middle of June, that the Ministry was at an end, when his Royal Highness yielded to the advice of his more judicious friends, and an arrangement was made by the King to pay him fifty thousand a year from the Civil List.\*

Carlton House, where the Prince of Wales took up his abode, became the rallying-point of the most fashionable and dissipated portion of the Whig aristocracy. If they could not boast of Royal favour, they sanguinely trusted in the faith of the heir-apparent. In many a wine-cup that faith was prodigally pledged. After a dinner, given to the leaders of the party, the Prince rose to propose a bumper toast, and asked Burke whether the toast-master was not absolute. "Yes, Sir, *jure de vino*," was the answer. "That is the only way," said the Prince, "in which I should wish to be absolute." Loud cheers burst from the lips of the delighted Whigs.† There was perhaps more truth in the declaration than his Royal Highness himself intended to convey.

In answer to Johnson's celebrated classification of intoxicating liquors, claret for boys, port for men, and brandy for heroes, Burke, at Sir Joshua's, had replied, "Then let me have claret; I love to be a boy, and to have the careless gaiety of boyish days."‡ And even in those days of official life, political success, and a Prince of Wales's smiles, Burke, notwithstanding his years of anxious toil, did preserve much of the careless gaiety of our early years.

As the session was drawing to a close, a stranger one Sunday afternoon came on an unexpected scene at Har-

\* See Fox's Letters to Lord Northington in the Memorials and Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 114-21.

† Bisset, vol. ii. p. 144.

‡ Boswell's Johnson.

row. There Sheridan having rented a cottage, some of the Coalition Ministers had that day come out to dine with their brilliant colleague: Fox, Erskine, Fitzpatrick, the Hon. John Townshend, and their host were lounging on the green before the door; while Burke, though the oldest of the party, was seen gaily dragging a child's carriage round the gravel-walk, with its little inmate laughing tears of joy at the rapidity of the motion. The statesman seemed as much pleased as the child. He only desisted from his task on the summons of his friends, who were mounting their horses to ride back to town.

During this London season, a subject very different from his ministerial duties sometimes occupied the leisure of the Paymaster. Barry had for seven years been engaged on a celebrated series of pictures for the great room of the Society of Arts and Commerce in the Adelphi. He had but sixteen shillings in the world when he began this voluntary labour, which, however advantageous it might be to his reputation, could be attended with little pecuniary profit. By making drawings for the printsellers, he managed however to save himself from absolute want, and at the same time to continue his great work. He desired Burke to suggest some historical subjects for the series, dedicated to him the print of Job, and presented young Richard Burke with other prints of great but unequal merit. The artist had managed, during these years, to keep on friendly terms with his old patron; and at length, as his pictures were exposed to public view, might consider that his most ambitious dreams were fulfilled. One day in May, he received a mysterious letter from the Cocoa-tree, Pall Mall, signed J. R. L., containing an ela-

borate and elegant criticism on the theory propounded in his account of his pictures, and promising a further contribution on the works in detail. Barry immediately supposed that Burke, wishing to avoid a personal controversy, had taken this method of pointing out the defects of the Adelphi paintings. Some earnest advice on portrait-painting, from the philosophic point of view, on the necessity of a careful study of anatomy, and on the difference between greatness of size and greatness of manner, was in the very spirit of the letters Burke had formerly addressed to the artist at Rome, and of the critical observations pervading the *Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful*. Barry replied to the letter on the following day, asking for an interview with his anonymous correspondent, but by no means acquiescing in the justice of all his remarks, some of which he even attributed to a want of candour. No other communication was ever received. If Burke was, as from internal evidence seems unquestionable, the author of the criticism, he doubtless saw that, from the manner in which his letter had been answered, there could be little satisfaction in continuing the correspondence, and as Barry evidently suspected him, there might, from the artist's impulsive nature, be some danger of becoming involved in an angry dispute.\*

The reformation of India, then his great and paramount labour, certainly left him little leisure for criticisms on the fine arts. Parliament adjourned with the political season in much apparent tranquillity, but also in great expectation of the coming session. The Royal Speech at the prorogation pledged Government to summon the Legislature to deliberate on the question of India, as early as

\* See Barry's *Life and Works*, vol. i. p. 257-269.

possible in the autumn, and to continue the consideration with serious and unremitting attention.

In fulfilment of this pledge, and to prepare the way for the great measure which it was understood the Government would introduce, the last Reports of the Select Committee on the Administration of Justice in Bengal were published. Two of them, the ninth and eleventh, exclusively from Burke's pen, were highly interesting and instructive documents. They have been incorporated among his collected works, and may still be read with profit and admiration. The ninth Report gives a curious account of the trade of Bengal, and the effect of the Indian Government on the different articles of export, concluding with an exposition of the absurd and contradictory system of administration which prevailed under the supremacy of Warren Hastings. The eleventh Report relates more particularly to the presents which Burke afterwards made the sixth charge in the impeachment of the Governor-General, and which he himself elaborately opened in a speech extending over four days. The singular episode of Hastings's resignation of his office through his agent Maclean, and the resolute stand which he made, in defiance of his appointed successor, to maintain himself in his situation, is also minutely related in this eleventh Report; and the public trial of the Indian statesman is from this time clearly defined on the horizon of the future.

Hastings was still in the East. But his former aide-de-camp, and now his paid agent, Major Scott, was in London, and had been examined by Burke before the Select Committee. The enthusiastic Major's answers had been far from satisfactory; and he beheld with great indignation the Reports laid in succession before Parliament,



reflecting so strongly upon his principal. As he was not yet a Member of the House of Commons, his only means of public defence was through the press ; and he had therefore for some months been assailing Burke, in pamphlets and newspapers, as influenced by the lowest and most discreditable motives in prosecuting the Governor-General of India. A Series of Letters to Edmund Burke, Esq. ; a Letter to Edmund Burke, Esq., on the Ninth Report of the Select Committee ; a Second Letter to Edmund Burke, Esq., on the Ninth Report of the Select Committee ; a Letter to Edmund Burke, Esq., on the Eleventh Report of the Select Committee ; a Second Letter to Edmund Burke, Esq., on the Eleventh Report of the Select Committee, all followed each other, in the course of three or four months, from the indefatigable pen of the prolific Major.

Scott believed that there was but one virtuous statesman in the world, and this was his patron Mr. Hastings. According to him public men in general were associated together for the public ruin ; the Members of the Secret Committee, the Members of the Select Committee, were all wretches ; Burke himself was an adventurer, a politician by trade, an infamous scoundrel. On the day of the prorogation, Burke, in moving for some papers respecting Hastings's dealings with the Begum Princes of Oude, had accused him of peculation. Major Scott, in the gallery, flew into a violent passion, and while standing at the bar of the Lords, bitterly complained to Lord North, who had seconded Burke's motion. " I dare Mr. Burke to prove it," said the Major. " If there is a man upon earth free from peculation, it is Mr. Hastings." Lord North was surprised at Scott's fierceness, and replied, " Major, you should not be so violent ; consider

peculation is a very common word in the House of Commons." "True, my Lord," replied the Major, "and it has been applied by Mr. Burke in former times to your Lordship, with as little justice, I believe, as he now applies it to Mr. Hastings." Lord North laughed. Again the Major said to this pleasant Minister, "There was a time, my Lord, when Mr. Burke persecuted your Lordship with as much inveteracy as he now does Mr. Hastings." "True," answered Lord North, "they badgered me till they turned me out; and shall I tell you a secret? they will badger Hastings till they rout him out too." \*

The preparation of the India Bill, which was to be the decisive ordeal of the Coalition Ministry, belonged properly to Lord North as Secretary of State. He seems however not to have troubled himself at all on the business, but quietly left this great task to his more vigorous associates. As the measure was generally spoken of as Fox's Indian Bill, many of Burke's admirers, disapproving of it, have endeavoured to persuade themselves that the younger statesman had the greater share in producing it, and that Burke was not peculiarly responsible for this bold and original plan of reform. Fox, however, had but little knowledge of India. As Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, his time was quite sufficiently employed during the autumn in concluding the definite treaties with France and Spain, and in negotiating a separate peace with Holland. Burke being fresh from the inquiries of the Select Committee, had alone in the Government the information on which the great expedient could be based. To him, as during the rest of his life, the leadership on Indian affairs was silently yielded. Nothing therefore can be gained by shutting the eye to

\* See Gleig's *Memoirs of Hastings*, vol. ii. pp. 522 and 524.

facts, or trying to conceal the truth : whether the Indian Bill was a good or bad measure, in all the principal features it was undoubtedly his work.

He would himself have been the last man to shrink either from the glory or the obloquy of the production. Far from repudiating the unhappy offspring, he has left on record an explicit acknowledgment of his parentage. In his correspondence there is a letter of this autumn from Arthur Pigot, who had recently been made a King's Counsel, was appointed in this November Solicitor-General to the Prince of Wales, and in 1806 was the Attorney-General of the Administration formed after Pitt's death, requesting Burke to send him as much of the Bill, or the instructions for the Bill, as he had ready. Burke sketched the plan and Pigot put it into legal form ; the one was the architect, the other the builder ; for though the letter is only signed A. P., it also has a note upon it in Burke's handwriting, containing these words, which amount in themselves to a confession of authorship : "From Mr. Pigot, who finished the India Bill from my draughts." \*

To give effect to this comprehensive scheme, Parliament, as promised at the prorogation, was summoned earlier than usual. The first day of the session was almost serene. On the afternoon of the eleventh of November, there were few signs of the mighty tempest which soon afterwards raged with so much fury throughout the political world, disturbing the closest private relations, interrupting the dearest friendships, setting agent against employer, brother against brother, father against son.

Fox's friend, the Earl of Upper Ossory, moved the

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 22.

Address. It was seconded by Sir Francis Basset. After Sir Joseph Mawbey had declaimed against the Coalition, and applauded the peace, Pitt rose and immediately declared that he intended to give a hearty affirmation to the motion ; for that, as there was not an exceptionable idea either in the Speech or in the Address, that unanimity which was frequently recommended might for once be seen. He however maintained that the definite articles of peace, for which they were to thank his Majesty, were only a transcript of the preliminary articles which the present Ministers had led the House to censure ; and, in alluding to the promised Bill on India, he hoped that the measure would be no compromise, no palliative, no half-measure, no temporary scheme, but a remedy at once new, complete, substantial, and effective. Fox, in reply, denied that the articles of peace then ratified were in all respects the same as the Shelburne Ministry had negotiated ; but he argued that, had they literally been the same articles, Ministers, after the faith of their sovereign was pledged to other Powers, had no alternative but to carry those terms into effect. He also announced that no time would be lost before the Indian measure was laid before the House ; and at once appointed the following Tuesday, the eighteenth of November, for introducing the subject.

All was expectation. It became known that the plan was of the boldest and most vigorous description. On the Tuesday afternoon, every part of the House was crowded with Members, East Indian proprietors, and Peers of the realm, impatient to hear developed by the lips of the leading statesman of the day, and first debater of the age, the great scheme on which the fate of the Ministry and the future welfare of India were considered

to depend. Fox's introductory speech was worthy of himself and of his subject. Perspicuous in style, and full of information, it left nothing to be desired. The plainest Member at once saw, from the Minister's lucid exposition, the characteristics of the plan, which was certainly found to be what Pitt had loudly demanded it should be, neither a palliative, nor a half-measure, but a strong, simple, and effective expedient to remedy the gross abuses of the Indian administration.

A Board was to be formed of seven individuals, nominated in the first instance by Parliament, to govern with absolute authority the whole Indian administration. A subordinate Board, of eight gentlemen, was to be appointed especially for the superintendence of the commercial affairs of the Company. The Commissioners were to hold their offices for four years. On the expiration of the appointed time, the vacancies to the superior Board were to be filled up by the Crown, while the right of nomination to the inferior Board would reside in the Court of Proprietors. A supplementary Bill was also to accompany the first, settling the rights of the native Proprietors, abolishing monopolies, rendering illegal the receipt of presents, and determining the disputes between the Nabob of Arcot and the Rajah of Tanjore: it was indeed to be sternly directed against all those abuses which had flourished with such rankness under the government of Warren Hastings, and which the Secret and Select Committees had so strongly condemned.

Lord North was absent from indisposition. But Fox assured the House that his noble colleague fully concurred in the plan then propounded, and, as proof of this harmony, the motion for the introduction of the Bill was seconded by Lord North's son, Colonel North.

After this ceremony had been gone through, all eyes were turned upon Pitt. He stood up amid breathless attention. Lord North's absence, he commenced by satirically remarking, was of little consequence; the Secretary had just demonstrated how competent he was to perform both his own duties and those of his inactive colleague. Enormous abuses there doubtless had been in the Company's Government, and enormous, Pitt declared, they must be to justify a measure which, at one stroke, abolished all the Company's charters. He should at present suspend his judgment with regard to the operation of the Bill; but it seemed at the first glance to place the whole power of the East in the hands of the Minister's nominees; and, as a system, to be on one side absolute despotism, and on the other the grossest corruption.\*

On the twentieth of November, the Bill was to be read a first time. A determined opposition was however organized, and talents of new and various kinds set themselves in emulous array to assist or to impede the progress of a reform, which, whether justifiable or not, even its enemies admitted to be most vigorous and effective, which excited equal dismay among the King's friends at Westminster and the kindred race of jobbers in Leadenhall-street, and which, it was reported, had such an effect on the mind and conscience of one great Indian Nabob, that he died out of pure fright, after reading the clauses of the Bill.†

Pitt's cousin, William Wyndham Grenville, took the lead in opposing the first reading. He was the third son of George Grenville, and, during Lord Shelburne's ad-

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxiii. p. 1187-1213.

† Wraxall's Hist. Mem., vol. iii.

ministration, had been Chief Secretary of Ireland, while his eldest brother the Earl of Temple was Lord Lieutenant. Having been the friend of Pitt from childhood, they remained attached to each other for many years, and had in common many moral and intellectual qualities. Grenville had not his cousin's personal dignity, nor his sonorous command of language; his body was unwieldy; he was stiff, cold, and formal in manner and address; without suavity, without animation, without grace; but his knowledge was extensive, his judgment was sound, his letters and speeches were full of vigour and full of matter; that most useful of all qualities for a practical English statesman, sterling common sense, he possessed in so eminent a degree as in his case almost to rank with genius.

Two distinguished lawyers also, on this evening, spoke for the first time in Parliament. Erskine brought admirable powers of declamation to the assistance of his ministerial friends, though those who had heard him at the bar, whispered that he by no means made so great a figure in the House of Commons as in Westminster Hall. John Scott, afterwards when Lord Eldon so celebrated as the incarnation of honest but obstructive Toryism, made a moderate first speech against the Bill, but warming with opposition, saw at last in Fox's seven reforming commissioners, the seven-headed beast rising out of the sea, as foretold in the Book of Revelations.\*

In this debate Jenkinson accused the Ministers of attempting to render themselves independent of the Sovereign. As the representative of secret influence, his speech produced a great sensation, since it was supposed unmistakably to imply that the King disapproved

\* Parl. Hist. vol. xxiv. p. 34.

of the measure. Fox commented in language of the utmost severity on Jenkinson's observations, declaring, with his eyes steadily fixed on this mysterious agent of intrigue, that when he first heard the doctrine broached of separating the Crown from the Ministers, he at once foresaw who would take the lead in the discussion. Pitt supported Jenkinson, and hoped that when administration passed the bounds of moderation, the representatives of the people would always be able to distinguish the Minister from the Sovereign. Annoyed that a plan which he regarded as indispensable for the reform of Indian misgovernment, should be accused of originating in the lowest motives of party, Burke, with much warmth, at the conclusion of the debate, sprung up, and in answer to Pitt, said that such arguments came from the heart, not from the head, and therefore could not be answered. Only those who knew their own baseness of disposition, would impute base motives, when the system itself could not be arraigned. Burke was answered by Wilberforce, who made the House merry by turning a medical simile against his opponent; and Mr. Thomas Pitt declared that as long as he possessed powers of speech he would raise them against the Bill: but the Opposition, conscious of their weakness, did not divide, and the first reading was carried without a division.\*

The Ministers, aware of their perilous situation, allowed no delay. Only seven days intervened after this last debate, when, on the twenty-seventh of November, the measure was again brought forward to be read a second time. His powers rising with the excitement of the time, and the consciousness of the magnitude of the prize for which he was contending, never did Fox show greater

\* Parl. Hist. vol. xxiii. p. 1224-1247.



ability than in moving the second reading. Lord North, still suffering from illness, had come down to the House, and supported his colleagues in an argumentative speech ; but even he, apparently overawed by the gravity of the occasion, indulged in none of the sallies of wit that were so generally characteristic of his pleasant oratory. In vain Pitt demanded the postponement of the measure for a single day. Administration came triumphantly from the division, carrying the second reading by a majority of one hundred and nine votes.

No auspices could appear more favourable ; yet none were really more deceitful. A majority of about two to one in the House of Commons might seem calculated to defy all hostility. The Government had however never been popular, and the powerful Indian interest with its extensive ramifications throughout the whole kingdom, had thrown all its weight into the scale of the Opposition. The cry which they first raised was gradually taken up by others, and a feeling of distrust and apprehension was becoming prevalent throughout the nation. Prudent statesmen would not have slighted the evidence of opposition displayed by the City of London, and by some of the oldest and most attached friends of the Rockingham party during the American war.

On the first of December, the Opposition made a most determined stand against going into Committee. Thomas Powis, an honest and liberal country Member, began the resistance in an effective speech, which was gall and wormwood to his former allies on the Ministerial benches ; nor was the feeling of intense bitterness relieved by the tears of sorrow which he abundantly shed on the occasion, and which indeed were one of the usual accompaniments of his eccentric, humorous, and impas-

sioned eloquence.\* One of his illustrations deeply affected the House. Acknowledging that the Bill was brought forward by Fox and others in whom he had once implicit confidence, he contended that in its leading qualities it resembled measures of spoliation and oppression such as had been committed by Lord North's ministry: "I hear," said Powis, "the voice of Jacob; but the hands are those of Esau."†

Powis's speech called up Burke in defence of the measure. He then delivered that great oration on the Indian Bill which was soon afterwards published, and which, though of course assailed in a pamphlet by Major Scott,‡ has ever since been read with admiration as a finished model of oratorical composition, and a gallery of the finest illustration. It must remain as the most enduring memorial of the Indian Bill, and even on its first delivery occasioned equal delight among an exasperated and fevered audience. Nathaniel Wraxall had up to this time steadily voted with Lord North; but on this evening he crossed over to the other side of the House, to join, with other deserters from the Coalition, the champions of Toryism, who, though out of office, were supposed to be more acceptable to George III. This man, sensitive, vain, talkative, and egotistical, was no worshipper of Burke at any time, and was on this occasion more than ordinarily hostile, because he was under the influence of that peculiar animosity which affects politicians who recruit the ranks of their recent adversaries: yet he has expressed his admiration of this speech, in language so enthusiastic that, were it to be

\* Wraxall's Hist. Mem., vol. iii. p. 731.

† Parl. Hist., vol. xxiii. p. 1309.

‡ Observations on a Speech of Edmund Burke, 1783.

literally followed by a faithful biographer of Burke, it would doubtless be considered extravagantly panegyric.\*

The leading argument of this great speech is that the Company's government was incorrigibly bad. The orator shows that every treaty they made was broken, that every prince who trusted in them was ruined, and had indeed, from the Great Mogul downwards, been openly sold. All the abuses afterwards charged against Hastings are detailed, and the conclusion is brought out that the objects for which the charter was granted having been completely lost sight of and set aside, Parliament was bound to resume its original duties and take away those chartered rights which had produced so many wrongs. The Directors had been not more successful as merchants than as statesmen. The complexion of their government was uniform; the men whom they had branded as criminals remained in office,—those whom

\* "The most ignorant Member of the House, who had attended to the mass of information, historical, political, and financial which fell from the lips of Burke on that occasion, must have departed rich in knowledge of Hindostan. It seemed impossible to crowd greater variety of matter applicable to the subject into a smaller compass; and those who differed most widely from him in opinion, did not render the less justice to his gigantic range of ideas, his lucid exposition of events, and the harmonic flow of his periods. There were portions of this harangue in which he appeared to be animated by feelings and considerations the most benign as well as elevated; and the classic language in which he made Fox's panegyric, for having dared to venture on a measure so beset with dangers, could not be exceeded in beauty. Indeed if I were compelled to name the finest composition pronounced in the House of Commons, during the whole time that I remained a member of that assembly, from 1780 to 1794, I should select this speech of Burke. Far from suffering by comparison with the orations of the greatest ancient masters, Greek or Roman, I believe it would gain on an impartial examination."—Wraxall's Hist. Mem., vol. iii. p. 567.

they had enthusiastically praised, either died broken-hearted in India, or on return to England found the doors of Leadenhall-street shut in their faces. A glowing eulogium is made on Francis ; a defence of the principle of the India Bill follows ; and Burke concludes with a fervent panegyric on Fox as the author of the measure, every sentence of which, referring to the benefits about to be conferred on the people of India, was pronounced in a strain of philanthropic fervour that extorted involuntary respect from the most determined opponents of the measure, and a chorus of enthusiastic cheers from Fox's friends on the crowded Ministerial benches.

It was not until nearly eight hours after Burke had sat down that the division was taken. The eminent speakers of each side put forth all their powers. Seldom has a Minister appeared in a more brilliant light than Fox, when, at half-past four on the following morning, he concluded this exciting debate, by resolutely declaring, in answer to Pitt's opposite assertion, that he would stake character to character, and risk everything that men held most dear on the constitutional safety, the enlarged policy, and the equitable wisdom of the Bill.\*

If majorities in the House of Commons had been the only test of success, Burke and Fox had ample reason for congratulation. By two hundred and seventeen to one hundred and three, it was decided that the Speaker should leave the chair ; Ministers were equally successful in committee ; and, by a majority not less triumphant, the measure finally passed the Commons on the eighth of December. On the following day it was carried up to the Lords by Fox, with a troop of admiring and confident supporters in his train.

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxiii. p. 1434.

From the Peers it met with a different reception. The declamations of Pitt, Grenville, and Jenkinson against the Bill, as restricting the Royal prerogative, naturally made, and of course were intended to make, a deep impression on the Royal mind. On the first of December, a paper signed by Lord Temple was secretly delivered by Lord Thurlow to the King, advising him, as soon as the Bill came before the Peers, to use his influence to induce them to throw it out. A card was drawn up in the King's handwriting, authorizing Lord Temple to declare that his Majesty would regard as his personal enemy any one who voted for the measure introduced by his Majesty's responsible advisers. The result is well known. Peers, on the morning of the debate, suddenly withdrew their proxies; the Lords of the Bedchamber either stayed away or voted with the Opposition; and Burke and Fox, who were anxiously watching the progress of the measure from the steps of the Throne, had the keen mortification of seeing their administration twice defeated, and the Bill finally rejected, on the seventeenth of December, in the Lords by a majority of nineteen. At midnight of the following day, the King sent a messenger commanding Fox and North to deliver up their seals of office; and the whole Administration was dismissed the next day.

Thus was terminated, in a manner as sudden as unforeseen, both the fate of the Indian Bill and the great Coalition Ministry. The opponents of the Government admitted that the extraordinary use made of his Majesty's name to influence the votes of the Legislature, could only be justified by the exceptional nature of the case. Burke always maintained that the manner in which his friends were defeated and Pitt obtained power, was

in the highest degree unconstitutional and disgraceful. Was the Indian Bill really a measure justifying the unprecedented interference of the King against his advisers? Was the King only driven to use indirect means to secure his own prerogative insidiously assailed by his own Ministers?

The fact of the Bill having been planned by Burke seems in itself a sufficient answer to this serious charge. There never was an English statesman more favourable than he to the constitutional authority of the Sovereign, or to the preservation of all the rights and privileges of the different Estates of the realm. That he would deliberately have brought forward a plan, as Temple and Thurlow assured George III., and Mr. Pitt was never tired of asserting, "to take away more than half the Royal power, and by that means disable the King for the rest of the reign,"\* is a supposition contradicted by the whole tenour of his life. That he could have devised a measure having such a tendency, without himself being aware of those consequences, is still more absurd. And even putting Burke's own name out of the consideration, it may well be doubted whether any English statesman would ever, under our Parliamentary system of Government, attempt to render the Ministerial power independent of the Sovereign's prerogative and the declared will of the people. Such accusations may indeed be made by unscrupulous opponents to serve a party purpose at the moment, but they never can bear the calm investigation of posterity. Lord North and Charles Fox, bad as might be their politics, were not madmen. Any Ministers who could venture on so desperate a design as

\* See Lord Temple's Letter to the King, December 1, 1783, in the *Memoirs of the Court and Cabinets of George III.*, vol. i. p. 288.

they were charged with undertaking, would be fitter for St. Luke's than for St. Stephen's.

The Indian Bill was not this wicked and dangerous project. It transferred the political authority of the Company to the Crown ; and thus did immediately and at once what, ever since that time, at every recurring cycle, the Legislature has gradually and effectually sought to do. It in no respect curtailed the Sovereign's prerogative, because, as Burke conclusively showed, long after the Company acquired the dominion of the East, the Crown had not, directly or indirectly, any share either in the patronage or the administration of the Indian Government. Some of the courtiers who in 1783 were not ashamed to arraign the measure, both for diminishing and increasing the prerogative, and who declaimed on the inviolable sanctity of charters, were the very men who in 1773 had laid the first hands on the Company's charter, who, against Burke's remonstrances, extorted from the Directors enormous sums of money, and who passed the Regulating Act, which, whatever might be its demerits, established the principle that the Company was completely subject to Parliamentary control. In that Act, Hastings, Clavering, Monson, Barwell, and Francis were appointed by Parliament, just as in the Bill of 1783, Lord Fitzwilliam, Frederick Montagu, Mr. Gregory, Colonel North, Sir Gilbert Elliot, Sir Henry Fletcher, and Lord Lewisham were nominated commissioners by the same authority. Nothing could be more unsound than the argument that, because the Ministers had the selection, and, by their majority in the Commons, the virtual appointment of those seven commissioners, they would, through their nominees, even when out of office, have the whole patronage of the Indian

Government. Any Administration under whose auspices this reform should be made must necessarily have the appointment of the greater portion of a new Indian Board. But it by no means follows that such men as Lord Fitzwilliam and Mr. Frederick Montagu would have been the obedient slaves of the statesman who appointed them, whether he might himself be either in or out of power. This assumption is contradicted by all experience. Lord North, alluding to the little influence a Prime Minister had over the divines he had himself raised to the Episcopal bench, wittily said that the first thing a bishop forgot was his maker. The memory of a bishop is not better than that of a commissioner. Gratitude in the political world has been satirically, but not untruly, defined as a virtue shown, not for what men have received, but for what they have yet to expect. Whoever indeed looks at this Indian Bill, and the objections made to it, with impartiality, must admit that it did not make any inroad on the Royal prerogative, and that, on the contrary, by vesting the appointment of all the commissioners in the Sovereign, after the expiration of the four years allotted to the existence of the Provisional Board, it did very substantially increase the Royal authority. It was an able, efficient, and enlightened expedient, aimed at the reform of great abuses, liberal in its intentions toward the people of India, and just both to the Sovereign and the public of England. It was defeated through what cannot be characterized otherwise, among the chief agents, than as a wretched intrigue, by which the only too susceptible mind of George III. was alarmed, to counteract Ministers against whom he was deeply prejudiced, but who really meant well both to himself and the millions over whom he ruled.



It is not surprising that those insidious schemes were successful in acting on the antipathies of the King. It may seem unaccountable, however, that, all the outcry against the Indian Bill being really absurd, the people should have also become so incensed against its authors. Yet in this there is nothing extraordinary. Their indignation against the Bill was only the effect of which the cause was the Coalition. The sins of the Ministers were visited upon their measures. Under a Government which had strongly the public confidence, like that of Lord Rockingham in the previous year, however loud might have been the clamour of their opponents, swelled even with a corrupt Indian interest struggling for their means of corruption, it would have produced little effect. But the people having been first shocked by this sudden union, disliked the Ministers, distrusted their intentions, credited the wildest assertions of their enemies, and at last applauded the most unfair and most unconstitutional means employed to overthrow a power that was believed to have been established on the grave of public principle. Good measures lose half their virtue, and notwithstanding the most profound calculations, are always liable to miscarry, when brought forward by a Government which, however estimable may be many of its members, has not in its construction conciliated the national confidence. The Coalition Ministry fell, not so much from the Indian Bill, but from the inherent vices of its original constitution ; and though many persons may some day think that the measure itself was really benevolent and farsighted, yet they can never regret that a Cabinet composed of such incongruous and discordant elements met with the fate it deserved, and might have expected. The strongest condemnation

of the Ministry consists in the fact, that ever since that time the very word Coalition has been hated by the great body of the people.

On several occasions before the final event occurred Burke had many anxious hours. Even in the few intervals of leisure he spent in literary assemblies, when he generally threw off all his political cares, he was, during the brief existence of the Government, observed by Miss Burney to be harassed and ill at ease.\*

Since the dinner at Sir Joshua's, of the preceding year, the acquaintance between the Burkes and the Burney family had become most cordial. They had met frequently at the great artist's, occasionally at the good-natured Mrs. Vesey's, and once at the free and easy Miss Moncton's, in Charles-street, Berkeley-square, where visitors had to find the drawing-room as they best could, enter it unannounced, and accept a nod and a "How do ye do" from the fashionable hostess, lounging on one chair while bending over the back of another, and always, even at Christmas, wearing a thin muslin dress, while most of her guests were attired in the richest and gayest silks and satins.† On the publication of Miss Burney's 'Cecilia,' Burke had been one of the most enthusiastic of its admirers. He had sat up all night to read 'Evelina;' he carried 'Cecilia' about for three days, while busied in his official duties, dipping into it at every

\* "Mr. Burke was extremely kind to me," wrote Miss Burney at this time, after an evening at Mrs. Vesey's, "but not at all in spirits. He is tormented by the political state of affairs; and loses, I really believe, all the comfort of his life, at the very time he has risen to the station his ambition has long pointed out to him."—Madame D'Arblay's Diary, vol. ii. p. 271.

† Memoirs of Dr. Burney, vol. ii. p. 277; and Madame D'Arblay's Diary, vol. ii. p. 188.

leisure moment, and never parting with the volumes until he had reached the last page. He ventured, however, to intimate to the retiring authoress what he considered to be the faults of the work, and especially that the conclusion ought to have been either more happy or more miserable; "for," said he, "in a work of imagination there is no medium." Frequently in the course of summer he dropped in and took tea with the family circle in St. Martin's-street, and Dr. Burney and his daughter called occasionally on Burke and his wife at their official apartments in the Horse Guards. In the course of one of these visits, he gave Miss Palmer a beautiful writing-case with many ingenious accessories; but she, looking at Miss Burney, exclaimed, "I am ashamed to take it, Mr. Burke; how much more Miss Burney deserves a writing present." "Miss Burney!" replied the Paymaster, with mock indignation of manner, "Fine writing tackle for Miss Burney? No, no; she can bestow value on the most ordinary. A morsel of white tea-paper, and a little blacking from her friend Mr. Briggs, in a broken gallipot, would be converted by Miss Burney into more worth than all the stationery of all the Treasury."

But he was at the same time endeavouring to confer a more substantial favour on Miss Burney's father. One day, after a dinner at Sir Joshua's, Burke surprised the amiable teacher of music by taking him aside, and with great delicacy informed him that the organist's place at Chelsea College was vacant, and that if Dr. Burney would accept it, the salary should be raised. At the very height of the struggle on the Indian Bill, Burke was earnestly endeavouring to complete this business, and at the very moment of the change, sent up the in-

creased vote for the approbation of the Treasury. The new Government confirmed this act of the retiring Paymaster. As soon as Burke received the official papers, he took them up to Dr. Burney's house with his own hands. The Doctor was not at home; and Burke could only see the daughter. Instead of thinking that he conferred any honour by his visit, he apologized for taking up her time, but said he was anxious to communicate personally the intelligence that the business of the Chelsea Organ had just been settled in Dr. Burney's favour by the Treasury. He laid the documents on the table. Then pausing, he remarked, with affectionate satisfaction at the appointment, though without concealing his regret at the catastrophe that had occurred to his friends and to himself, "This is my last act of office!" \*

It was indeed his last act of office. Years of labour, of anxiety, of disappointment, and sorrow were yet to be his lot in the world; but with the three months in the Pay Office during the preceding year, and with the eight months in that which was then closing, his Ministerial career had terminated for ever.

\* Madame D'Arblay's Memoirs of Dr. Burney, vol. ii. p. 376.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

1783-1785.

## DISAPPOINTMENT AND DEFEAT.

THE shrewdest politicians were deceived. Although Pitt had accepted the offices of First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, no person at the time anticipated that his Government would be of any long duration. With an Opposition, as it appeared, numbering about two to one over the supporters of the Ministry, and led by Parliamentary ability of the very highest excellence, who could suppose that a young Prime Minister, not yet five-and-twenty years of age, had entered on a lease of power unprecedented since the House of Commons had become supreme in the State,—a power that he would exercise, almost as independent of the control of his colleagues as of his opponents, for seventeen years, and then rather voluntarily lay down than surrender to his political enemies? Fox spoke of another Ministerial change immediately after the Christmas recess as inevitable, and confidently anticipated his speedy return to the Foreign Office. The veteran Welbore Ellis, whose authority on such a point was almost considered infallible by the young Members of the House, solemnly shook his white head, and declared that the Ministry with a boy for its leader could never last.\* Though

\* Wraxall's Hist. Mem., vol. iii. p. 626.

Burke, on again returning to the Opposition benches, took no active part in the violent struggle that ensued between Pitt and the majority of the House at the command of the expelled Coalition Ministers, yet even he could not have expected the complete defeat and rout of his friends, and the absolute and abiding triumph of the juvenile statesman.

Pitt was just born at the time when his father's glory arrived at its zenith, by the series of splendid victories which distinguished the year 1759. During his childhood and boyhood he must have continually imbibed those sentiments about the evils of all political parties which Chatham was so fond of inculcating, that he might himself enjoy a more thorough and uncontrolled dictatorship. Imbued with these maxims of haughty isolation, he, like his father, could, at the proper occasion, be ready to assist the King against the Whig aristocracy, and organize a Tory party, though himself anything but devoted to what were generally believed to be Tory principles. The mistakes of the Whig leaders had been singularly favourable to Pitt's ambition. Their losses had been his gain. From his first entrance into Parliament, his judgment appeared as much matured as at any later period of his life; and that judgment had induced him steadily to refuse forming one of any Cabinet in which Lord North should be a member. This resolution, almost the only settled principle he had avowed, recommended him to a people still suffering from the disgraces and losses of the American war. All the popularity lost by Fox and Burke by their coalition with their old enemies, was transferred to one whose name had been associated with so many victories and triumphs, so much ardent patriotism, so much lofty eloquence and daring genius.

The leaders of that party which, under Lord Rockingham, had won the highest public favour, appeared lately to be smitten with judicial blindness. They saw not their error until the consequences became irretrievable, and a more youthful favourite of the people had risen to supreme dominion.

Pitt was, like his father, thoroughly patriotic, though he had not his father's antique heroism. He was Chatham, with the higher part of Chatham's genius taken away, and some of the plainer and more practical qualities of Sir Robert Walpole substituted in its stead. His eloquence, compared with his father's, exhibited the difference in their intellectual characters. Stately, flowing, sonorous in manner, correct in diction, on first acquaintance Pitt's speaking seemed the perfection of Parliamentary oratory. A closer examination, however, showed that, wide as it apparently ranged, it was really limited; one speech would almost stand for all; there was poverty even in his very copiousness, a barrenness amid all his seeming luxuriance. The comparison which some of his admirers made between the full tones of his voice and the rolling notes of a drum, was not in every respect so favourable as they intended, for the drum, though one of the loudest is also one of the emptiest of musical instruments. There was seldom either much thought, much character, or much knowledge in Pitt's speeches; excellent models of the State-paper style, they seem to have something of the coldness, artificial reserve, and insincerity of Royal speeches and official despatches. There are few traces in them of Fox's fervid individuality, of Burke's glowing imagination and comprehensive philosophy, or of that magnificent declamation and soul-stirring power which made

Chatham be regarded as the first of British orators. It seems also even more surprising that, in the department of statesmanship for which Chatham had the highest aptitude, Pitt showed himself utterly incompetent; while in the branches for which Chatham was totally unqualified by nature, and from which he turned away in disgust, Pitt surpassed all his contemporaries. Chatham was the greatest of war ministers and the most incapable of financiers; Pitt, one of the greatest of financiers and the most incapable of war ministers.

In some points, however, they strongly resembled each other. They both disdained enriching themselves at the expense of the State, had no sordid vices, and were careless and extravagant in their private expenditure. Chatham can scarcely be imagined examining the items of a tradesman's bill, or keeping a cash-book. Every year Pitt's pecuniary affairs grew more hopelessly embarrassed: when the coachmaker pressed for the settlement of his account, the statesman quieted him by ordering a new carriage; and the residence at which the tax-collector of Westminster had the greatest trouble in obtaining payment of the assessments was that inhabited by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.\* Chatham seldom unbent in private, and never in public. His greatness was altogether solitary, and became even, as Burke has recorded, artificial, theatrical, and false. Pitt was equally distant and equally haughty, and with much less reason. His manners were colder than his father's; he knew no domestic joys; only a bosom companion like Wilberforce could see anything that was amiable or genial in his character; and even Wilberforce regretted that, from his reserved and sullen demeanour, Pitt made no friends.† Fox

\* Wraxall's Hist. Mem., vol. iii. p. 652.

† Wilberforce's Life, i. 78.



had a ready smile and cheerful nod for the most casual acquaintance. Pitt walked up to his seat on the Treasury bench with his head thrown loftily backward, and a rapid and decisive step, neither looking to one side nor the other, nor condescending to notice even one of the wealthy country-gentlemen or sons of peers, whose votes constituted the strength of his Government, and who would have been gratified by the slightest recognition from their chief.\* Tall and thin, but without grace or symmetry, with little expression in his face, and few indications of genius on his brow, he looked like a great officer of State, rather than a great man, and seemed never to forget that he was the son of the Earl of Chatham, and Prime Minister of England. Commanding rather than prepossessing, much however that appears unfavourable in his portrait may arise from the early age at which he acquired power, and the long period during which he retained it. He seemed at once the first and the most fortunate man in the British dominions. Yet Nemesis still waited on successful ambition. To gain at a single bound, and at the outset of life, what Burke had not even approached after eighteen years of the hardest labour, and the highest genius; to wield that power with scarcely an interruption while life lasted; to sacrifice for it every other worldly enjoyment, and every other means of moral and intellectual improvement; to find at last difficulties gathering around him which had not clouded the prospect of his earlier and better years, and which gradually sapped his strength and broke his heart; and to die at length of chronic disease and old-age at forty-six: obscure merit and plodding mediocrity had no reason to envy this spoiled

\* See Wraxall's Hist. Mem., vol. iii. p. 636.

darling of courts, ministries, and parliaments, as nearly twenty years after this period, on his brief retirement during the Addington Ministry, he paced the beach beneath Walmer Castle, solitary, childless, loveless, trembling at the rapid progress of the great conqueror whose camp then threatened England from the opposite cliffs of Boulogne, and while anxiously, as Warden of the Cinque Ports, drilling excisemen and fishermen, pining again for the return of that power the exercise of which had become to him a second nature, but which, like the shirt of Nessus, was in a few brief months more to exhaust the vital force that yet remained within him, and drag him to his premature grave.

At the beginning of 1784, Pitt's fortunes were however suspended in the balance. His victory was not certain ; for the Coalition still commanded a majority in the House of Commons, though many signs might have told them that they were fighting a losing battle.

The East India Company addressed all the corporations in the country, calling upon them to support the Directors in the defence of their charter and property as in a common cause. The effect of the appeal, though not immediately obvious, was immense. Two celebrated caricatures also made their appearance at this time, and being everywhere circulated, deeply wounded the Coalition with the potent weapon of ridicule. The one depicted Fox, as a political Samson, carrying away the India House, while the Directors were seen struggling in terror to get out of the windows ; the other even more ludicrously represented the same statesman as Carlo Khan, triumphantly entering Delhi, as a Mogul Emperor, on the back of an elephant, whose face ridiculously resembled the heavy and grotesque features of

Lord North, while Burke, as a trumpeter, was unmistakably shown marching in advance. That January too a publication was advertised, entitled *The Beauties of Fox, North, and Burke*, which, though bearing the *Shakespeare Tavern* as the address in the preface, was found to be a minute collection of all the invectives the chiefs of the Coalition had made against each other in the course of their long antagonism, culled from the very imperfect, but in this respect sufficiently explicit, Parliamentary records of their day. At the same time all the honours and rewards at the disposal of the Crown, gold sticks, white wands, official badges, knighthoods, baronetcies, were lavishly bestowed on those who left the ranks of the Opposition. Even the parsimony of the Sovereign in creating British peers at once relaxed, and a batch of courtly gentlemen, including Pitt's faithful uncle, the Honourable Thomas Pitt, was sent up to the House of Lords. Popular favour and Royal favour for once went in the same direction ; public approbation and official emoluments were both showered on the deserters.

Yet, though the precipice to which they were inevitably approaching was visible to all persons but themselves, the Coalition leaders rushed rashly on their fatal career. On the first day of the meeting after Christmas, Fox refused even to allow Pitt to deliver a message from the Throne until he had moved and carried several strong resolutions against the continuance of the Ministers in office. But even the result of the division, successful as it was, indicated plainly that the great majorities of the Coalition were fast diminishing under the temptations to which they were exposed. Before Christmas the Opposition had carried every question by

about two to one; but now the Government, in a full House, was only defeated by the comparatively small number of fifty-four. Soon afterwards thirty-four composed all the numerical superiority of Pitt's opponents; later in the month it sank to twenty-one; and afterwards dwindled down to eight.

This last division, which nearly converted the Government into a majority, was on the commitment of an Indian Bill, which Pitt formed from resolutions passed by the proprietors of Indian stock, and which, with some important modifications, became law in the next Parliament, and established that Board of Control, and almost irresponsible system of double government, that has in some form lasted to our day, and been so highly praised by the East Indian interest and the Minister's admirers. The principle was certainly very simple; it was a mere compromise between the Company and the Crown, preserving the charter of the one, and increasing the authority of the other, but by no means bringing the exercise of those extensive powers under the complete superintendence of Parliament. Jealousy of the House of Commons was one of its characteristics. The Court of Directors and the Board of Control seemed by common consent to draw a veil round the mysteries of Indian government, and carefully to hide their proceedings from a scrutinizing Parliament. The principle of the Coalition Bill was exactly opposite. Pitt established a system of complication, concealment, and mystification; Burke's plan was all openness, simplicity, directness. He sought to do in 1783, what Parliament has sought to do with more success, though not with so much completeness, in 1858.

Burke naturally opposed Pitt's bill. He foretold,

when it was first laid upon the table of the Commons, that it would never produce a good working system of government, and declared that, though he was willing to pay homage to every corporeal and mental virtue, he was surprised at Pitt's audacity in remaining in office against the reiterated resolutions of the House. The expression, every corporeal virtue, raised a laugh at Burke's expense; but he maintained that the expression was classical, and that he could prove it from an author of the highest authority. A corporeal virtue was of the kind that depended upon the body; such for instance as uncommon boldness, arising not from moral courage, but merely from the vigour of the nervous system; and the Prime Minister's conduct in continuing in office against the will of the majority, and even attempting to legislate for India on principles exactly contrary to those which that majority had sanctioned, showed that he at least, among other physical and mental qualifications, possessed this bodily virtue in the utmost perfection.\*

All this was good as sarcasm. But it does not carry conviction. Pitt remained in office, it is true, against the declared opinion of a Parliamentary majority; but he also alleged that this majority was not in conformity with the wishes of the constituents, and in no respect represented the feelings and opinions of the country. As according to every constitutional theory, the heart of the House of Commons ought to synchronize with the heart of the people, the only proper test of the propriety of the Minister's conduct was a dissolution. What then opposed this dissolution? That majority led by Fox and Burke, which surely, unless it represented public opinion, was absolutely valueless. As a general rule,

\* Collected Speeches, vol. ii. p. 493.

with scarcely an exception, it may be affirmed, that a House of Commons which shows itself afraid of a dissolution ought at once to be dissolved. It is better, surely, that the members who compose the popular branch of the Legislature should imbibe the most fleeting sentiments of the people whom they represent, than that they should be compelled, under the Ministerial threat of dissolution, from proceeding in a course which their judgment does not sanction. Pitt therefore was strong, with all his Parliamentary weakness,—the Opposition weak, with all their ostensible Parliamentary strength.

Burke, whatever others might be, could himself scarcely be insensible to this serious fact. In truth he saw it well. The anxiety he had shown at the position of his friends while they were in office, commanding all the strongholds of government, and with an undiminished following in the House of Commons, was certainly not to be removed when they were summarily dismissed from office, another and a more popular Ministry formed, and their own party growing less powerful on almost every division. At this time he himself did but little. Growing old, with poverty still as his companion, a violent outburst of popular feeling at work against him, disliked at Court for the virtue he had displayed and for the good he had done, after such a brief success the political game again going against him, and with the prospect of many years of thankless and almost hopeless struggle once more on the barren Opposition benches, while he saw a young man not his superior in integrity, and much his inferior in genius, attain at a bound the highest position in the State, and gradually strengthen himself in that position,—it is neither wonderful nor blameable that

Burke had moments of sorrow and dejection which checked even the usual exertion of his intellectual faculties. At the outset of a political life, with strength as yet unexhausted, and hope alluring him onward, the Opposition side of the House has its charms for the ambitious statesman. All this is however changed in age. Burke had spent more of his life in opposition than any other man then living; and with the rise of Pitt's popularity, and the decline of that of himself and his party, he had only too much cause for feeling weary and down-hearted on resuming his old place. During the months of January and February, 1784, it was said that, with the loss of the Pay Office, he appeared to lose much of his mental energy.\*

'The work was also not altogether suited to his nature. It was a mere play of tactics on both sides. Pitt endeavoured to gain time, in order that his electioneering machinery might be put in good working order, and the prejudice against the Coalition, which had at first only been entertained by the higher circles, and politicians about the Metropolis, should leaven the great mass of the country. The Opposition sought to prevent a dissolution, and yet feared to take the only effective step, that of boldly and decisively attempting to stop the supplies, which, if successful, must have rendered a dissolution impossible. Some honest and patriotic Members assumed a neutral attitude, and endeavoured to bring about a reconciliation between Pitt and Fox, that they might be incorporated in the same Government. Both leaders affected to acknowledge that such an arrangement was desirable; but there were many difficulties in the way. The Opposition, asserting that Pitt had

\* Wraxall's Hist. Mem., vol. iii. p. 747.

obtained power by unfair and unconstitutional means, insisted on his virtual resignation before any negotiations should be begun. In the circumstances of the former March, or even December, Pitt might have wished for such an amicable settlement. He had however now attained all that the most ambitious man could desire. He was Prime Minister; he was the leader of an increasing party; he was popular throughout the country. His opponents had at the same time grown odious to the nation; their ranks were weakened by desertion; and it seemed certain that their majority would be finally extinguished on the hustings, if it did not, as was not improbable, previously disappear in Parliament. United with Fox, Pitt could not be greater than he was, and it was almost certain that he would be less. He was therefore, as the gentlemen who held their sittings at the St. Alban's Tavern at last publicly declared, the real obstacle to their projected union.\*

After this well-meant but unsuccessful mediation, the warfare became only more deadly. But the end of this dangerous conflict, which had for nearly three months suspended all the functions of administration, and threatened to destroy the most valuable institutions of the country, was fast drawing near. On the eighth of March Fox moved, in answer to a reply made by his Majesty to an Address of the House, a long Representation to the King, recapitulating the former proceedings of the Commons, and regretting that the Ministers had not taken any further steps to form an extended Administration. Pitt left his defence to Dundas, who vehemently assailed Fox and the Coalition, and was considered to have delivered the best speech he ever made. Burke, who

\* See Parl. Hist., vol. xxiv. p. 669.



had hitherto remained more a spectator than an actor in the contest, came forward in defence of his friend and of his party. His depression seemed to have been shaken off. He spoke with all his usual animation, energy, and eloquence ; but even he could not successfully uphold this declining cause. At midnight the division was taken, and the majority of the Coalition, recently so overwhelming, was found to be reduced to a single vote.\*

From that day the struggle was over. Pitt, aided indeed by favourable circumstances, and the exertion of every courtly engine of corruption, and every popular means of influence, had displayed the most consummate generalship, and virtually beaten the Opposition on their own ground. No triumph in our political history, recorded of the most veteran statesman, equals the splendour of the victory won by a mere youth over the greatest orators and political leaders that any age had known. Fox himself appeared appalled into silence. He allowed the Mutiny Bill to pass without a division. During the fortnight which Parliament sat after the debate on the Representation, neither he nor Burke regularly attended the House, and they never opened their lips. The field was almost completely abandoned to the victorious Minister, who sat in contemptuous silence, disdaining to answer the questions of the discredited Opposition.

On the twenty-fourth of March, the Parliament was prorogued by the King, and the next day dissolved by proclamation. Then was seen in all its fatal consequences the mistake of statesmen who hastily abandon their ancient enmities, and form new alliances for the

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxiv. p. 744.

mere convenience of the moment, without considering that a nation is looking on, and may ultimately sit in judgment on the perilous manœuvres of their ambition.

Political connections between representatives and constituents, the longest, the most cherished, and the most respectable, were violently dissolved. The powerful aristocratic interest of the Cavendishes was beaten at York, and Lord John himself, the most virtuous and honourable of men, rejected for Lord Galway, who never spoke in the House before midnight, when he was always drunk. William Baker was thrown out for Hertfordshire, George Byng for Middlesex, Mr. Coke for Norfolk. The prolix and dull, but steady and honest David Hartley, lost his election for Hull. Erskine, the most brilliant of advocates, was defeated at Portsmouth; and Foljambe, the successor and representative of the late Sir George Savile, completely beaten for Yorkshire. Burke's old friend and patron, Earl Verney, at last ceased to represent Buckinghamshire. But a still more serious loss was apprehended. The Westminster election had begun on the first of April. For the first three weeks Charles Fox was at the bottom of the poll; and Pitt already regarded the defeat of his rival as certain.\*

The Coalition was not merely beaten, it was totally routed. A hundred and sixty Members lost their seats; and as they were nearly all supporters of the late Ministry, they wittily dubbed themselves Fox's Martyrs.

Burke was himself personally uninjured by the storm which overwhelmed his friends. In 1780, when the Opposition was really popular, and when its conduct was irreproachable, he had felt the effects of popular indignation, and, to the disgrace of the representative

\* Letter to Wilberforce : Wilberforce's Life, vol. i. p. 63.

system, been rejected at Bristol. Now, when there was some justification of the dislike of the people to the Whigs, and when their rage was visited on the heads of those whom they had long revered, he was quietly re-elected for the borough of Malton, through Lord Fitzwilliam's influence, without anxiety and without a murmur, though all the rest of Yorkshire was in open revolt against his party and his politics. He even had the opportunity at the time of basking in the sunshine of popular favour, while to the troubled glances of his political associates the horizon was darkening all around them, and the raging whirlwind was tearing so many time-honoured associations up by the roots.

In the preceding November he was unexpectedly informed that he had been chosen Lord Rector of Glasgow University. This testimony of respect was less a matter of form than it has since become, and Burke was far from despising the honour conferred upon him by the unsolicited votes of the Scotch graduates. As he was in Yorkshire, going through the formalities of his election, he also determined to proceed further North, and go through the necessary ceremonies of his installation at Glasgow. On the tenth of April, surrounded by all the eminent Professors of the University, many celebrities in literature and science, and the most respectable people of the neighbourhood, he was installed as Lord Rector. When he rose to speak, he felt the contrast between the professors, students, and authors, who composed so considerable a portion of his audience, and the eager partisans of the House of Commons, and the noisy freeholders of Bristol, and faltered out that "he had never before addressed so learned an assembly." This incident has more than once been dwelt upon in our days by

Lord Rectors, who thought they paid the highest compliments to the academicians of Glasgow, by stating, in the exordiums of their addresses, that it was indeed presumptuous in them to speak where Edmund Burke was mute.\* It nevertheless appears that Burke, after he had taken the oaths of office, did manage to make a speech, and a good speech. Strangers of rank and eminence had come from far and wide to attend the inauguration of so celebrated a Lord Rector, and listen to the eloquence of one who was considered the most eloquent orator then living. He gave great satisfaction, and was enthusiastically applauded. He afterwards did what Dr. Johnson in Scotland refused to do, attended the Presbyterian form of worship in the College Chapel, and in the evening was sumptuously entertained by the dignitaries of the University.†

Reluctantly he set out to return southward. Every mail brought him news of the total discomfiture of his friends, and of the triumph of their foes. Through every county on his way to London, traces of the disastrous political contest were to be seen; the battle-field was strewn with slain, among whom at every step were the familiar faces of cherished allies. From Westminster however the tidings became more cheering, as day by day Burke, in his dusty post-chaise, came nearer the Metropolis.

Finding himself last on the poll in the middle of April, Fox despaired of success. The books, however, were kept open, and the election continued, when, as the month drew to a close, and all the voters in the neigh-

\* See the Inaugural Addresses of Lord Macaulay and Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton.

† See the Chronicle of the Annual Register for 1784, p. 187.

bourhood had been polled, it became necessary to bring up those who remained in the outskirts of the town.

In this desperate contest, the good Dr. Burney found himself in great perplexity. He had just been comfortably installed as the organist of Chelsea Hospital, an appointment which of course placed him under an obligation to Burke and the Coalition leaders. Yet Dr. Burney was a sincere Tory, and as such could not think of supporting a party so obnoxious to his Sovereign. He wrote dubiously and apologetically to Burke, who returned home in time to relieve the Doctor's mind by a letter as remarkable, even in that scene of turbulence and faction, for its calm philosophy as for its friendly candour and affectionate sympathy. "God forbid," said Burke, "that worthy men situated as you are, should be made sacrifices to the minuter part of politics, when we are far from able to assure ourselves that the higher parts can be made to answer the good ends we have in view! You have little or no obligations to me; but if you had as many as I really wish it were in my power—as it is certainly in my desire—to lay upon you, I hope you do not think me capable of conferring them in order to subject your mind or your affairs to a painful and mischievous servitude." \*

A struggle so animated and inveterate the annals of electioneering had never known. All the influence of the Court, the Treasury, and the India House, was exerted against Fox, and the champion of the Whigs must inevitably have shared the fate of so many of his brethren in arms, had not a fair enchantress come to his rescue, and turned the tide of conflict at the moment when it seemed that all was lost.

\* *Memoirs of Dr. Burney*, vol. iii. p. 122.

This was Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, the daughter of the late Earl Spencer. She was married at seventeen to the head of the house of Cavendish, and was now in her twenty-fifth year. She was the reigning Whig toast, and for years had dispensed the princely hospitality of Devonshire House with irresistible grace. Witty, vivacious, accomplished, she was no regular beauty; her auburn hair was not without a reddish tinge, and Horace Walpole, jealous of the loveliness of his niece, considered that her Grace had never been really beautiful, and that her features were at this time fast becoming coarse.\* But few could withstand the fascinations of her smile, her pleasing manners, and the beaming glance of her eyes, in which there shone as much gentleness and kindness as intelligence and virtue.

The brilliant Duchess, assisted by her sister the Lady Dungannon, exerted herself indefatigably to retrieve the fortunes of the Westminster election. Had her life and honour depended on the issue, she could not have thrown more earnestness and zeal into the struggle. From morning until night, on many consecutive days, her carriage was seen in every suburb, and its noble and charming owner in earnest parley with some brawny carpenter, florid butcher, or sooty blacksmith; more than one vote was said to be sold by its sturdy owner to Fox's cause at the price of a kiss or a caress from the young and lovely Duchess.

The tide slowly began to turn. By the exertions of this charming Georgiana, and several other female allies from the same exalted sphere, with fascinations scarcely inferior, at the beginning of May Fox gradually gained on his opponent Sir Cecil Ray. The populace joined in

\* Letters to Sir Horace Mann (Second Series), vol. iv. p. 108.

a reaction in favour of a statesman opposed with such pertinacity by the Government and the Crown. Though the election was continued until the sixteenth of May, only two days before the time appointed for the meeting of the new Parliament, Fox steadily improved his position, and stood at the close second on the poll by a small but still an undeniable majority.

He ought then to have been returned as one of the Members for Westminster. But the High Bailiff, a tool of the Government, acceded to Sir Cecil Ray's request for a scrutiny, and the merely formal declaration of victory was prevented.

The popular favourite, however, went through the ceremony of chairing, and the demonstration on the seventeenth was most enthusiastic. Several earnest friends of the Coalition sat on the box of Fox's carriage; before it was even carried the ostrich-plumes of the Prince of Wales; the splendid vehicles of the Dukes of Devonshire and Portland brought up the rear.

On the next day, as the King was proceeding down St. James's Park to open Parliament, a crowd of noble and eminent personages was seen assembled in the grounds of the stately mansion of the Heir Apparent. The Prince of Wales had given a magnificent entertainment in celebration of Fox's triumph at Westminster, and the bulky person of Lord North, and the tall figure of Burke, might be beheld, dressed in the party suit of buff and blue, as they strode through the groups of gay and fashionable devotees of politics and pleasure, on the lawn and under the trees at Carlton House.

Nor did the rejoicings of the day end there. On the same evening, the same persons met at Mrs. Crewe's, in Lower Grosvenor-street. This lady, the wife of the

Member for Cheshire, had taken almost as active, though not quite so prominent, a part as the Duchess of Devonshire in Fox's favour during the election. She was very handsome and extremely amiable, and, even at that season of lax morals, as virtuous as she was beautiful. Next to the Duchess of Devonshire, Mrs. Crewe might be regarded as the most fascinating Whig lady of those joyous days, when it seemed to be the policy, and became the habit, of the Whig leaders to make amends for their exclusion from power by all the social amenities of wit and pleasure. In this respect they far excelled the Tories. Three noble mansions were at their exclusive devotion, and by their attractions defied the august splendour of Royalty itself. At Carlton House the Heir Apparent delighted to honour the politicians on whom his father frowned. At Devonshire House in Piccadilly, and at Burlington House, then inhabited by the Duke of Portland, almost equal magnificence was displayed. The Prince of Wales appeared in every Whig circle, and appeared eminently to advantage. His smile, his tact, and his urbanity, were the delight of his associates; and the Whigs might, indeed, in looking to the future, feel compensated for the inveterate hostility of the father by the unrestrained adherence of the son. On the night of the meeting of Parliament, Burke and his wife were at Mrs. Crewe's, with whom indeed they remained to the last on more friendly and intimate terms than with most of their aristocratic companions. The ladies, as well as the gentlemen, wore the buff and blue colours, and after supper great enthusiasm was displayed when the Prince, dressed in the same uniform, rose and proposed the success of their cause, and the health of their lovely hostess, in the



brief but energetic terms, "True Blue, and Mrs. Crewe!" Not to be outdone, she roused the exuberant enthusiasm of her guests to the highest pitch of demonstration, as she bowed her thanks for the compliment, and gave as another toast, "True Blue, and all of you."\*

This was a pleasant night after a pleasant morning, but in Parliament everything was not so pleasant.

The House of Commons had no sooner assembled than the diminished numbers on the Opposition benches struck the eyes of all. Cornwall was again chosen Speaker, at the dictation of the Minister. The next day the Royal Speech was delivered, but before the motion for the Address was made, John Lee strongly condemned the conduct of the high bailiff Corbett, and proposed a resolution that two citizens ought to have been returned for Westminster. The division, though in a cause where justice was unquestionably on the side of the Opposition, at once demonstrated their weakness and the irresistible strength the Government had acquired. Lee's motion was rejected by a majority of one hundred and forty-seven. The Address, echoing the Royal Speech, which expressed his Majesty's satisfaction at the dissolution of the late Parliament, was, notwithstanding the vehement opposition of Fox, who took his seat as Member for the Kirkwall boroughs, carried by a still greater majority. For nearly a fortnight afterwards

\* See Wraxall's *Posthumous Works*, vol. i. p. 17. Wraxall's posthumous publication is in many parts extremely inaccurate, though his account of debates at which he was himself present, incidents which he himself observed, and particulars which, though derived from others, are evidently authentic, cannot be considered of trifling value. He was much of a political Boswell, but, like Boswell, he has preserved glimpses of life and character for which we look in vain through the pages of more elaborate authors.

the question of the Westminster election was kept before the House : counsel argued at the bar, witnesses were examined and cross-examined, all the legal formalities were discussed and exhausted ; but the power and arrogance of the Minister, backed by his obedient majorities, bore down even the splendid resistance of Fox's eloquence and logical subtlety, ably exerted as they were on his own personal question.

Lord North and Sheridan steadily supported Fox in these discussions. Burke scarcely at all interfered. At this time, indeed, from some unexplained cause, a coolness may already begin to be discerned in his relations with Fox and the younger members of the Whig party. Though he heartily defended the general course of policy on which the Coalition had so disastrously embarked, his efforts seem far from having been received with real gratitude or even common thanks.

Before the conclusion of the debates on the Westminster election for the Session, he gave public notice of a motion respecting the King's Speech and the Address voted by the Commons. Pitt taunted him for not giving more information about the form which the question would assume, and was by Burke himself understood to sneer at his insignificance.

On consulting with Fox, Burke had the mortification to find that his leader disapproved of the step he was about to take, and seemed indeed not to interest himself at all on the subject. To Burke, however, it appeared of much importance. He could not conceal from himself that, after the popular verdict on the Coalition, and the extreme hostility which that unfortunate combination had provoked, the conduct of himself and his party would ever appear of doubtful policy. He wished, there-

fore, to place on record an elaborate defence of himself in framing the Indian Bill, and opposing a Minister who had grasped, and succeeded in keeping, the reins of office in defiance of the repeated votes of the popular branch of the Legislature. He determined to draw up a regular argumentative vindication of the late House of Commons, in the form of a Representation to the King, which, though certain to be rejected, would in any event be preserved for posterity as a motion on the journals of Parliament.

On the fourteenth of June he attained this object. A Parliament, he said, had been sentenced, condemned, and executed, and no notice had been taken of so extraordinary a proceeding. If the meanest subject in the land had died suddenly, an inquest would have been held upon his remains; but a Parliament of Great Britain had been put to violent death, and no coroner had yet sat upon the body. The political highflyers who supported the Crown *à tort et à travers*, had joined with Republicans, and, from the most opposite views, agreed in running down the House of Commons. Doctrines the most unconstitutional had been broached. The Sovereign, in usurping the authority of the House of Commons, had, like Augustus Cæsar, assumed tribunitian powers. The people were taught to pass by the doors of their own representatives, and look for the protection of their liberties to the Throne. Burke warned them against this double House of Commons the Ministers were erecting on the foundation of popular delusion, that of the Commons of England in Parliament assembled, and that of the Commons of England in corporation and county meeting dispersed. The specious pretext for the dissolution was the Indian Bill, as though it was an

invasion of the Royal prerogative. But had not Parliament even very recently interfered with the Sovereign's most unquestionable prerogative, that of making war, by terminating the contest with the colonies? Had not even an Exclusion Bill been entertained in Parliament? If the day should ever come when a Member of the House or the whole House should be made responsible for a part taken in any Bill, on that day the liberties of England would expire. Burke then produced his Representation, which, as it consisted of many sheets of paper, and was folded like a lawyer's brief, excited roars of laughter throughout the House. Undismayed by the merriment the manuscript caused, he declared that he meant his motion as an epitaph on his departed friend the late Parliament, just as on some other occasions he had written long epitaphs on the memory of those whom he respected and honoured; and that on the present occasion he chose to follow the corpse to the sepulchre and go through the ceremony of saying "Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust," in sure and certain hope, through the merit of the good works of the last Parliament, that it would have a glorious and joyful resurrection, and become immortal.\*

The motion produced no debate. Many young Members made the loudest demonstrations of impatience as the clerk was employed in reading the document, of which the length was considered unprecedented and unmerciful. Two hours were spent in this merely formal perusal, and as soon as the question was put, it was immediately negatived, without a division, by a loud shout of "No! No!" from the contemptuous Ministerial benches.

Having been, however, afterwards published by Burke

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iiii. p. 9. Annual Register, 1784, p. 148.

in a pamphlet, it has received, and will yet receive, more attention from posterity than it met with at the time of its presentation from that unfriendly House of Commons.

As a composition, it is equal to the best of his writings. Respectful in tone to the King, whom it formally addresses, grave, perspicuous, dignified, and philosophical, no production from Burke's pen, or from that of any other author, contains sounder constitutional maxims. The unlimited power of the House of Commons to control the exercise of every part of the Royal prerogative, is calmly but firmly asserted in the boldest and most unqualified terms; the wretched system of Court intrigue is unequivocally condemned, and the defence of the Indian Bill is complete and triumphant. On one question, however, and that unfortunately one which was at the foundation of the prejudice against the late Parliament and the late Ministry, and which supplied the King and his new advisers with the weapon which struck their adversaries to the heart, this Representation is altogether silent. It does not defend the Coalition, it says nothing about the Coalition, and yet, as every impartial person must admit, it was on the prudence and morality of the Coalition as a Government worthy of confidence that depended the justification or the condemnation of the defunct House of Commons. On that point the judgment of the people had been unmistakably expressed, and against that judgment there could be no appeal.

This Fox and other eminent members of the party appear tacitly to have admitted, by refusing to give Burke any support. Not one of them spoke in his favour, and he was evidently hurt, and not without reason, at the manner in which he was abandoned while

asserting what was, after all, the cause of the whole party. Long afterwards he remembered this desertion, and recalled it to the memory of those who, while in the most marked manner refusing to indorse his Representation at the time, did not disdain afterwards to make his alleged inconsistency with its sentiments a ground of reproach.\*

Among all Burke's old friends no seconder for his motion could be found. It was seconded merely in form, and without any additional observations, by a young man who had just taken his seat for the city of Norwich, and who, while politicians that had long fought by Burke's side, and were under the greatest obligations to him, began to look upon their former preceptor with indifference, if not with dislike, attached himself from this time to Burke with an affectionate veneration such as has seldom been seen since the Athenian sage bade farewell to his weeping followers and drank the hemlock which released him from the earth, or since the first great Christian teachers and martyrs were consoled in their

\* "The author of the Reflections, in the opening of the last Parliament, entered on the journals of the House of Commons a motion for a remonstrance to the Crown, which is substantially a defence of the preceding Parliament, that had been dissolved under displeasure. It is a defence of Mr. Fox. It is a defence of the Whigs. It is true that Mr. Burke received no previous encouragement from Mr. Fox, nor any the least countenance or support at the time when the motion was made, from him or from any gentleman of the party, one only excepted, from whose friendship on that and on other occasions he derives an honour to which he must be dull indeed to be insensible. . . . The party had no concern in it, and it can never be quoted against them. But in the late debate it was produced, not to clear the party from an improper defence in which they had no share, but for the kind purpose of insinuating an inconsistency between the principles of Mr. Burke's defence of the dissolved Parliament, and those on which he proceeded in his late Reflections on France."—*Appeal from the Old to the New Whigs.*

agonies by the reverential love of their earnest disciples, as they sank under the cruel blows of an unbelieving and persecuting world. This, without exaggeration, was the exact relationship between Burke in his old-age, and the youthful, ardent, generous, and intrepid Windham. He might well be proud of such a disciple. Windham, even before he entered Parliament, was acknowledged to be the finest representative of the English gentleman that the age had produced. When on his travels he was recommended by the incredulous Walpole to Sir Horace Mann as the finished model of youthful excellence. When, though not a member of Parliament, he held the office of Chief Secretary under Lord Northington, he had given equal satisfaction to the Irish people during the Coalition Ministry. All accomplishments, physical, moral, and intellectual, seemed to be united in his person. Though his face still bore some traces of the small-pox, yet his eyes were full of animation, and his countenance was suffused with health, acquired and maintained by his love of field sports and every manly English game, in which, as a country-gentleman, he did not disdain to indulge. His slight, thin, but finely-developed form might be seen at the wrestling-bout and cricket-match on the village green, as well as at the chase, in his native county of Norfolk. Everything that was good, beautiful, and humane, found in Windham an admirer, a champion, and a friend. Dr. Johnson, gradually sinking under age and bodily infirmities, was nursed by him with the most generous care. The young man of fashion gave up both himself and his carriage almost entirely to the service of the old, uncouth, and pedantic lexicographer. Hearing that Johnson, on paying his last visit to his native Lichfield, had

been seized with illness, and was unable to return home, Windham set off from town with his own coach and horses, waited at the country inn until the sick moralist was again able to travel, and then brought him comfortably back to London. His intellect was wonderfully subtle. As an orator he drew the keenest distinctions. He also declaimed with much picturesque force and deep earnestness of feeling. In his loves and hatreds, in his prejudices and his enthusiasms, even in his fondness for the old idioms of the English language, his temperament was thoroughly Saxon. He ever abhorred, as it was natural that such an English gentleman should abhor, all bloodshed, cruelty, and oppression ; and hence Burke, while declaiming most passionately against all wrong and violence, was, in the eyes of Windham, the incarnate representative of truth, reason, justice, and eloquence combined.\*

The absolute devotion of such a follower went far to console Burke under the treatment he experienced from so many of the younger generation on both sides of the House. In the former House of Commons he was generally listened to with respect, however much he might be occasionally annoyed ; but fully one-third of that House had disappeared at the recent elections, and the new Members, instead of being, like their predecessors, his political friends, had been chosen as the most determined enemies of himself and his proposed Indian reforms. Flushed with victory, and maddened by party spirit, they knew little of the services he had rendered his country, had no reverence for his genius, and laughed at his vehemence. To the immense researches he had

\* "You will come to hear Burke? To hear truth, reason, justice, eloquence!" said Windham to Miss Burney, on the impeachment of Hastings.—*Madame d'Arblay's Diary and Letters*, vol. iv. p. 77.



made as a member of the Select Committee on the affairs of Bengal, and his profound knowledge of Indian details, they were entire strangers; his indignant invectives against the authors of Indian abuses were to them the ravings of a madman. When he first struggled against misgovernment, he had suffered much from Rigby and other mastiffs of the Court; but nothing that he then endured was so intolerable as the insults to which he was now exposed, almost whenever he opened his lips in the House of Commons, from the puppies of the Administration. Turning round on one occasion upon his assailants on the Ministerial back-benches, who, while he was speaking, were indulging in the loudest jeers, he said, "I could teach a pack of hounds to yelp with equal melody and greater comprehension."\* The manifestations of their impertinence only became more frequent when they began to observe that some of those who belonged to his party, sat on the same benches with him, and called themselves his friends, saw these disturbances without any signs of disapprobation, and perhaps with concealed delight. It is certain that some of the occasions when he had the most difficulty in obtaining a hearing were when, consistently acting on his own convictions, he opposed the popular opinions of Fox and the more democratic members of his own particular connection.

In the preceding year, when the question of a reform of the representation was brought forward by Pitt, Burke had been, as we have seen, prevented from addressing the House at all. This year, two days after the rejection of the Representation to the King, that uncompromising republican and proficient whist-player,

\* Parl. Hist. vol. xxiv.

Alderman Sawbridge, whose hideous features reminded the Tory Wraxall of Tacitus's sketch of the tyrant Tiberius,\* revived in almost similar terms the recent motion for a committee to inquire into the state of the representation. Pitt, and Pitt's friends, so enthusiastic on the subject a few months before when out of office, began to use some of the stereotyped objection of Ministers, and to save their consistency by making vague promises for the future.

Burke, however, remained in opposition, as he had been in power, steadily opposed to the proposition. Again he rose after Fox, and again he was met by interruptions which drowned his opening sentences, and threatened to prevent him from continuing his speech. At last he succeeded in making himself heard. Fragments of this speech have been published from his manuscript papers. It commences with a philosophical dissertation against the natural right of individuals to representation, and in favour of the authority of prescription. "Representative Government," said Burke, "is not formed upon blind and unmeaning prejudices, for man is a most unwise and a most wise being. The individual is foolish. The multitude for the moment is foolish, when it acts without deliberation; but the species is wise, and when time is given to it as a species, it almost always acts right." He told Fox that by admitting that the representation required amendment, he was joining with his enemies, and blackening the character even of that House of Commons which had supported his Government. After a most luminous disquisition, which, whatever difference of opinion there may be about the mere question of reform, cannot but be read with pleasure,

\* Posthumous Memoirs, vol. i. p. 105.

for the depth of its reflections and the splendour of its imagery, Burke concluded with forcibly regretting that, instead of quarrelling with the conduct of men and the tenour of measures, persons were grown out of humour with that Constitution which had in former days been the envy of mankind, the pattern for politicians, the theme of the eloquent, the meditation of the philosopher in every part of the world, and so much the pride and consolation of Englishmen, that by it they lived, and for it they were ready to die. Sawbridge's motion was of course defeated. But the debate, to an observer of Burke's career, is most remarkable, as showing that years before the French revolution broke out, he was gradually assuming, amid the democratic tendencies of the day, the character of the anxious and far-sighted Conservative, looking with pious horror on those who, through a passion for theoretical innovation, would lay their profane hands on the ark of the Constitution. In the very spirit of his last writings, he concluded with saying, almost defiantly, "I look with filial reverence on the Constitution of my country, and never will cut it in pieces and put it into the kettle of any magician, in order to boil it with the puddle of their compounds into life and vigour. On the contrary, I will drive away such pretenders; I will nurse its venerable age, and with lenient arts extend a parent's breath."\*

This language was not likely to conciliate the more advanced section of his own party. At the same time, the resolute spirit in which he continued his crusade against the Indian interest, to which he considered the Ministry entirely subservient, rendered him more than ever obnoxious to his political opponents. Pitt, in suc-

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iii. p. 43-54.

cession, brought in a Bill allowing the Company to divide eight per cent. interest on their capital; another, respitting duties to the Exchequer, empowering them to accept bills beyond the amount to which they were legally restricted, and settling future dividends. Both these measures Burke warmly opposed. His most earnest efforts were, however, reserved for opposition to Pitt's Indian Bill, which was introduced after these other Indian propositions. This celebrated measure, which was finally passed into law, and determined for a long period the policy of Indian legislation, was in some respects materially altered from what it had been when recently proposed to the late House of Commons. The power of the Board of Control at home was much extended, and the authority of the Governor-General in India rendered absolute over the other Presidencies. Many salutary regulations were also taken from Burke's supplementary Bill relating to the internal administration of Indian affairs. Englishmen were made responsible to English courts of justice for all misdeeds in India; and an extraordinary tribunal, composed of three judges, four peers, and six members of the House of Commons, was erected for the more effectual prosecution of Indian offenders.

The extension of the power of the Board of Control Burke objected to, as inconsistent with the declared principle of the Bill. The increased authority of the Governor-General he maintained to be an inversion of the natural order of government, which was, that authority exercised at a great distance from the centre of administration, and exposed to the most serious temptations, ought to be carefully defined and rigidly restrained. Why was a reform of Indian legislation necessary? Because the government of the Directors had been at home weak

and impolitic, and because the conduct of their servants abroad had been cruel and rapacious. Yet what did this Bill do? It confirmed the authority of the Board of Directors in Leadenhall-street, and conferred additional powers on their servants in Hindostan. The new Court of Judicature he especially condemned as contrary to every principle of the Constitution; but his vehemence and energy were paralyzed by the powerful majorities at the command of the young Minister.\*

His vehemence, indeed, was frequently injurious to the object he had in view. With his friends in a hopeless minority, his cherished measures entirely defeated, and his policy abhorred both by the Court and the nation, instead of growing apathetic, or at least quiescent, during this summer, he became only the more pertinacious, and even violent, in his denunciations of the Indian interest and the Government which it supported. His speeches at this time abound in imagery, philanthropy, wisdom, all the noblest characteristics of his genius; yet was the manner of their delivery so impetuous and fervent that plain men, who knew nothing, and cared less about the crimes which he declared to have been perpetrated in India, thought his zeal, remaining, as it did, unseconded by the two leaders of the House, to be almost incompatible with soundness of mind. His madness, which had hitherto been only hypothetical, was considered at last to be most probable. On what ordinary motives could his detestation of Hastings and sympathy for Indian suffering be explained? Why should a man labour for years in Select Committees, and provoke the most deadly enmities, for people who were separated from him by thirty thousand

\* See Annual Register, 1784-5, p. 167.

miles of ocean, whom he himself had never seen, and who even in success could not give him the poor reward of thanks? According to the ideas of the world, the chain of reasoning was irrefragable. Since money or mere political success could not be the impelling principle of Burke's indefatigable struggles and boiling passions in the cause of the Asiatics, undoubtedly he was mad: it was a pity, but undoubtedly he was mad.

On the third reading of Pitt's Indian Bill, Burke rose at what was then thought a late hour, eleven o'clock. He remarked that the measure contained no preamble, and seemed formed in defiance of the voluminous Reports which the two Committees had laid on the table of the House. The Lord Chancellor had lately gone out of his province to affirm that he looked upon those Reports as no more authentic than the history of Robinson Crusoe; it was therefore right to inquire whether those documents had spoken truth or falsehood. Burke taunted Dundas, who, after being Chairman of the Secret Committee, and branding Hastings as an oppressor, constituted himself the champion of the East Indian interest, and discovered that Hastings possessed many virtues. He denounced the new Court of Judicature as taking away the ancient and inquisitorial authority of the House of Commons, and conferring upon it judicial powers unknown to the Constitution; and he then concluded by moving for a Committee to inquire into the facts contained in the Reports relating to the misgovernment of India.

Dundas, whose inconsistency in his proceedings on India was indeed so glaring that even his most indulgent friends had nothing to urge in his defence, denied that he had said that Hastings had many virtues. He was a

mixed character. In the negotiations of the peace with the Mahrattahs, even enmity and prejudice could not but see the features of a great statesman. Dundas also denied that the projected tribunal for the trial of Indian delinquents was an innovation on the Constitution.

Burke, again rising, complimented the Lord Advocate on the "mixed character" he now discovered in Hastings. Were those merits to be found in the extermination of the Rohillas, or the destruction of Benares; in the treatment of the most illustrious princes of Asia, or the devastation of a country of such fertility that every part of it was a garden, and uncultivated ground did not exist broad enough for the march of a battalion except in single file? The new judicature was only prospective. To the establishment of a Court which secured him from punishment for all his former actions, the most daring highway robber or the most plundering housebreaker within the walls of Newgate would have no objection. Burke then burst forth with a strange apostrophe, which caused much laughter and amusement throughout the House. "Forgive me," said he, "O Newgate, if I have thus dishonoured thy inhabitants by an odious comparison. Thy highwayman, who may have robbed one person on the highway, ought not to be compared with him who has plundered millions, and made them feel all the calamities of famine. Thy murderer, who may have deprived an individual of his life, would be disgraced by a comparison with him who has exterminated the inhabitants of a whole kingdom. Thy housebreaker is a harmless creature when compared with him who has destroyed the habitations of millions, and left whole provinces without a house."\* He added, that he had heard so much

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iii. p. 60.

said in praise of Hastings, that when he first commenced his investigations in the Select Committee he was prejudiced in his favour, and was even reproached by the friends of Sir Elijah Impey with that manifest partiality which the discoveries he had made in the Company's records had effectually removed.

A few days after this debate, Impey arrived in London, in obedience to the resolution which the House had passed in 1782, requesting his recall. Pitt officially announced the fact in the Commons, and regretted that no person concerned in the transaction was present at the time. Burke, being absent that evening, understood the observation to be a reflection upon himself, and afterwards affirmed that it was as much the duty of the leading Minister of the Crown in the House of Commons as it could be that of any private individual to act upon a resolution of the House. For his own part, he abandoned his intention of moving any further proceedings against the Indian judge, not because he had changed any opinion he had ever expressed with regard to the iniquity of Impey's conduct, but because he was convinced that, in the temper of the two Houses, such an undertaking would be impracticable.

Impey at that time escaped the impeachment which he most richly deserved. The threatened proceedings against Hastings would probably have been abandoned by Burke in a similar manner, had it not been for the Governor-General's evil genius, Major Scott, who had come into the new Parliament, and was as ready to make indifferent speeches in defence of his principal as he had been to write bad pamphlets in his cause. Fluent, verbose, pertinacious, self-complacent, whenever Burke assailed Hastings, the Major was sure to follow as his



champion ; and although he had been only three months in the Commons, he was already looked upon as a man labouring with one idea, and sitting in the House for one object : he had therefore already wearied even the partial majority among whom he sat behind the Treasury Bench, and was frequently coughed down.\*

Another addition to the new Parliament on the side of Hastings' assailants far outweighed in ability and eloquence the zealous but imprudent agent of the Governor-General. Philip Francis had taken his seat next to Burke, among the chiefs of the Opposition, and was ever at his ear supplying him with direct information on every Eastern topic as it arose, and inspiring in his bosom a hatred of Hastings, nobler, indeed, and more disinterested, but not less fierce nor less relentless, than the fell antipathy which gnawed within his own breast.

Francis had returned in disgust to England in 1780. When the inquiries of the Secret and Select Committees began in the following year, the evidence he gave had been of the utmost importance, and was not the less earnestly nor zealously given because it was deeply prejudicial to his old enemy. Hastings had triumphed at the Council Board in Calcutta, but that triumph had cost him dear. Driven from India, Francis had found an audience ready to listen to all the complaints of his wrongs and persecutions ; and, though the Directors of the Company, who had praised him highly in their despatches while he was in India, closed their doors in Leadenhall-street against him on his return, he had been publicly eulogized by Burke in his speech on the India Bill, as the man who had taught them the best lessons, and whose deep range of thought, extensive knowledge,

\* *Wraxall's Post. Mem.* vol. i. p. 121.

and comprehensive views of policy, had contributed to produce the most brilliant portions of the reports on which the Eastern legislation of the Coalition Ministry was based. In the debates on Pitt's India Bill, he had mortally offended the Minister by a glowing panegyric on Chatham, whom he affirmed had at his death left nothing in the world that resembled him. Yet in the House of Commons Francis scarcely met with the success he probably anticipated. After so much of his life spent at the desk, on coming into Parliament at middle age, he found that it was impossible to acquire the natural ease, readiness, and fluency, so indispensable to a leading speaker. There were passages in his speeches of great energy and ability, but it was in the councils of the party, and especially as the prompter of Burke, who, indeed, needed little prompting, in the impeachment of Hastings, rather than as an orator, that Francis was particularly distinguished. For thirteen years they laboured together in this cherished object of their lives. It was impossible for Francis to subdue his natural manner even when allied with one who had grown almost to be as impetuous and as impatient of contradiction as himself. He therefore said disagreeable things to Burke in the bluntest way, and boasted that he was, in the whole party, the only man who dared to tell him the truth. A tall, lean person, with eyes which spoke intensity of passion, a voice clear, yet sharp in its notes, a manner hurried, eccentric, determined: everything in his formation was quick, decisive, irregular, vehement, angular. His acidity of disposition displayed itself on all occasions. Rugged, manly, independent, he disdained to smile at anything, and, as a cynical Diogenes, he scarcely hesitated to tell the Prince of Wales to get out

of his way. If he was not the author of Junius, he most certainly ought to have been, since few who study those letters attentively can refrain from admitting that Junius was just such a man as he. The very airs of superiority which Francis assumed over his political allies showed a consciousness of his having done something great; and who but an author, who knew that he had himself written political letters that had become classical, could, on receiving some of the proof-sheets of one of the most brilliant and elaborate of Burke's later writings, boldly advise him to suppress the work, roundly find fault with the style, and gravely offer to teach him to write English?\*

To concentrate upon himself the wrath of both Burke and Junius,—for to me there seems scarcely any reason to doubt that Francis was Junius,—cannot but be considered as a strange misfortune in so wary a statesman as Hastings. Major Scott might be comfortably seated behind Pitt in the House of Commons, and Mrs. Hastings, who had been sent home to prepare the way for her lord's reception, might this summer make her appearance in London, and be received at Court with smiles from the precise Queen Charlotte, though the haughty Whig ladies looked down superciliously on her as an improper person, who had changed her husbands and would not wear hair-powder, and the wits of Brookes's joked on the topaz rings, which they said outnumbered the joints of her fingers, her massive gold earrings, gleaming with depending questions, and her diamond necklace teeming with future votes.† But Major Scott's eloquence and Mrs. Hastings' accomplishments

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 164.

† Probationary Ode to Major Scott.

were not powerful enough to protect the Governor-General from the hostility of two such antagonists. Neither his agent nor his wife even knew the ground on which they were thoughtlessly treading, nor the serious nature of the danger which, instead of seeking to prevent, they foolishly provoked.

On the thirtieth of July, Burke made several motions for the production of papers relating to affairs in Oude. Far from being alarmed at these preparations for future hostility, Major Scott took upon himself to second those propositions, on the plea that the more the conduct of Hastings was investigated, the more clearly would his innocence appear. Pitt, however, with what was considered a manifest indication of partiality to the Governor-General, refused to consent to the production of some of those papers, and successfully resisted Burke's application with all the forces of the Administration.

Burke was most indignant at the proceedings of the Minister. He made not less than four speeches on that evening, each in succession more vehement than its predecessor, and each denouncing, in a prophetic strain, Divine woe and vengeance on a country which allowed such iniquities as Hastings had perpetrated to go unpunished. Several young Members laughed at his animated outbursts of lofty eloquence and unrestrained sensibility. Comparing the levity of these juvenile statesmen to the indifference of the tyrant who fiddled when Rome was in flames, Burke put his hand on one of the volumes of Indian Reports, of which the literal truth of every sentence he pledged himself to make manifest to all mankind, and said, "I swear by this book that the wrongs done to humanity in the Eastern world shall be avenged on those who have inflicted them. They

will find, when the measure of their iniquity is full, that Providence was not asleep. The wrath of Heaven will, sooner or later, fall upon a nation that suffers with impunity its rulers thus to oppress the weak and innocent."\* He then read a series of motions, which he had intended to make, in order to inquire into the alleged crimes of the Governor-General, had the Minister not stopped him by the order of the day; then, he assured the House, he would again introduce at a future period, when no clamour should prevent him from seeking to bring the guilty to punishment, and to redress the wrongs of India.

These were considered empty menaces. The Minister, by resisting inquiry, was understood to have openly thrown the mantle of his protection round Hastings. The Governor-General's friends were all confidence and exultation. Unpopular in the House, unpopular throughout the nation, coldly supported even by many of his political friends, what prospect seemed there, as the Session terminated in 1784, that Burke would succeed in bringing Hastings to the bar of the supreme tribunal of his country in Westminster Hall? There was none. He was regarded as an intemperate calumniator, of great genius indeed, but of no judgment; a man of ungovernable passions, whose threats were so impotent that they became ridiculous. Major Scott spoke in triumphant strains about the unequivocal manner in which Pitt had declared himself in Hastings' favour, and the absolute futility of all the efforts of that vain, vapouring villain, Mr. Burke. Peerages and seats in the Cabinet were surely awaiting the virtuous Governor-General as soon as he should set his feet on his native

\* Parl. Hist. vol. xxiv. p. 1272.

shores, and the Major would be the man to prevent the wicked accuser from retiring in confusion without acknowledging that his accusations were false. Jockey of Norfolk, be not too bold !

It was not all disappointment and vexation. Even at this season Burke had some moments of real pleasure, in which those who only saw the violent features of his character, that were displayed in his attacks on Hastings, could scarcely imagine him to be a keen participator. Yet this apparent contrast was very natural : since hate itself has been pronounced to be only inverted love, and Burke himself earnestly maintained the doctrine, sounding so horrible to the ears of all the timid respectable and negative portion of society, that they only could love where they ought to love, who would also hate where they ought to hate.\*

One day during this summer there was an unexpected meeting. Crabbe, after being recommended by Burke to the Duke of Rutland as domestic chaplain, had ultimately obtained from the Chancellor, who declared with an oath that he was as like Parson Adams as twelve to a dozen, two small livings in Dorsetshire. The poet had at last been enabled to marry Miss Elmy, and, in passing through town on the way to visit this scene of his clerical duties, had the pleasure of presenting his bride to Mr. and Mrs. Burke at their house in Charles-street, St. James's-square. It so happened that Richard Shackleton had, on that very day, also brought his daughter, who afterwards became Mrs. Leadbeater, on a visit to the Burkes ; and the two parties came together in the Statesman's drawing-room. Two-and-twenty years afterwards, Crabbe, and Mrs. Leadbeater,

\* Reflections on the French Revolution.

at the time the only survivors of the happy group thus assembled, recalled to each other's memory the incidents of that afternoon, and the very positions in the room of the different friends who were then present. Burke, standing near the window with Shackleton and Crabbe, read aloud some verses which his friend's daughter had composed. She, a pretty, demure girl, stood by, trembling at the ordeal to which her poetical effort was subjected. The grave and pious schoolmaster, gratified by the approbation bestowed on his beloved daughter's production, condescended even to pay Crabbe the only compliment which Richard Shackleton is known to have paid in the whole course of his life. Speaking of Crabbe's poem of *The Village*, which had been published during the past year, the stern Quaker told the gratified author that henceforth Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* would indeed be regarded as the deserted village. And Mrs. Burke and Crabbe's young bride sat on the sofa together, hand in hand, quiet lookers-on, and every now and then exchanging a few confidential words, as married ladies of different ages are sometimes in the habit of doing. The kind and experienced lady of the house was destined, however, to survive the fair young wife, then blushing and happy at the praise her husband received, and at the kindness and generosity of his great friends. All have now gone for ever: the benevolent statesman, the formal Quaker, the enthusiastic poetess, the successful poet, his beloved Sarah, and the calm but sympathizing Mrs. Burke; yet the scene they formed together on that afternoon is one on which the mind loves to dwell.\*

\* Crabbe, writing to Mrs. Leadbeater, 1st of December, 1816, says on this scene:—"Mary Leadbeater! Yes, indeed, I do well re-

Burke took Shackleton and his daughter down to Beaconsfield. The young lady, brought up in an obscure Irish village, was highly delighted with the mansion of her father's friend, and the charming scenery of the neighbourhood. On returning again to Ireland, she gave utterance to her enthusiasm in a very pleasing poem, which Burke himself considered to be a faithful description of Beaconsfield as it looked in the autumn of 1784.\*

The first impression of the visitor on approaching the house was then, as it is now, of the woods which, from the very abundance of the trees, appeared to throw all surrounding objects into the shade, and give to the neighbourhood a somewhat gloomy aspect. This, however, was but the dark foreground of a very cheerful picture. After a three-quarters of a mile's ride or walk to the west of the little town, up a road then kept in good order, with a luxuriant hedge of unusual height extending on both sides, the stranger came suddenly upon the mansion on his left, which, with its pleasing wings outstretched, its two ornamental gates on the green lawn, its rows of stately pillars, and door that was always open, seemed at once to welcome every friend of Burke, and drive worldly care and sadness from the brow. On crossing the threshold the scene became still

member you! Not Leadbeater then, but a pretty, demure lass, standing a timid auditor while her own verses were read by a kind friend, but a keen judge. Yes, I remember all who were present; and of all are not you and I the only survivors? It was the day—was it not?—when I introduced my wife to my friends; now both are gone, and your father, who was present, and Mrs. Burke! All departed—and so, by-and-by, they will speak of us.”—*Crabbe's Life*, chap. ix.

\* Burke's very interesting letter to Mrs. Leadbeater on the subject is published by her as an introduction to the verses in her volume of poems.—See *Poems*, by Mary Leadbeater.



more inviting. Statues and paintings met the eye in every part of the hall ; some of these works of art having been bought from the former owner of the place ; and others, particularly the portraits, being recent productions of Barry, Reynolds, and other artists over whose progress Burke so zealously watched, and in the productions of whose genius he so thoroughly delighted. The different rooms were also furnished with so much richness and elegance, as to excite the surprise of the young poetess, who was little accustomed to see luxury and splendour in her own simple home at Ballitore, or in the habitations of her Quaker friends.

The courtesy and affection of her great host were, however, more admirable in her eyes than all the pillars, sculpture, paintings and furniture of his abode. Taught from childhood to hear his name mentioned with respect and affection, and as the only link connecting the humble household of the Shackletons with the great world of statesmen and sovereigns,\* she looked upon him with reverence, and almost idolatry. He deserved such worship better than most idols. Gentle, affectionate, unassuming towards the members of his own family, he was also dignified, polished, and courteous in his manner to all the rest of mankind. Nature had stamped the noblest impress of genius on his wrinkled brow, and Time had slowly conferred a grace on his address which made him appear singularly pleasing and lovable. In the House of Commons only the fiercer peculiarities of his character were now seen ; while at home he seemed the mildest and kindest, as well as one of the best and greatest of human beings. He poured forth the rich

\* "One link alone connects us with the great."—Mrs. Leadbeater's *Ballitore*.

treasures of his mind with the most prodigal bounty. At breakfast and dinner his gaiety, wit, and pleasantry enlivened the board, and diffused cheerfulness and happiness all round.

In more than one sense of the expression, it may be said that he had a large charity. The door, which seemed to Richard Shackleton's daughter so hospitably "ever open," was never closed against the poor. One afternoon, while the family and their guests were at dinner, and the master of the house was as usual seasoning the feast with his lively conversation, a starving beggar came to the gates, and stood, gaunt and famished, travel-stained and weary, before the window. With characteristic impetuosity, Burke rose hastily from the table, left his own meal, rushed out of the room, and never entered again until he had, with his own hands, administered relief to the starving wanderer, whose mute supplication had been to him so eloquent and irresistible. This was no single occurrence. In some manner such incidents happened almost every day. Miles round Beaconsfield the toiling drudges of the farms had, in sickness and misfortune, substantial reason to bless his name. He was at once their adviser, protector, patron, friend, and even doctor.

Though he had never professionally studied medicine, yet in his ardour for knowledge he had looked into that science as well as most others. Many of his compositions and speeches may be seen to abound in medical illustrations. The general practitioner of a country neighbourhood was frequently absent from home, and the maladies to which the poor day-labourers were most exposed required immediate and specific treatment. Burke's medicine-chest, therefore, was the ordinary resource. He

prescribed the remedies, and even made up his own prescriptions. At this day, in the village of Beaconsfield, two or three old people, the last relics of the generation among whom his closing years were passed, still remember to have taken in their youth pills and mixtures from Burke's hands.\* His practice was, however, not always unattended with hazard. He once, it has been said, administered a wrong dose to Mrs. Burke, and suffered a period of intense agony of mind until he learnt that she had escaped all the natural and serious consequences that were to be anticipated from taking a lotion instead of a draught. He was, however, no empiric. His old school-friend, Dr. Brocklesby, wrote him a series of prescriptions for the ordinary complaints of those hardworking but temperate country-people, and this good physician's directions he generally followed, modifying them, of course, to the circumstances of particular cases. After the danger Mrs. Burke had incurred through his error, he had some thoughts of abandoning medicine altogether, and he communicated this intention to Brocklesby, with the words, "Well, Doctor, I mean to give up practice!" But the wants of the peasants were too pressing to permit him to carry this design into effect. To the last, whenever he beheld a poor creature shivering with ague, or

\* I desire here to express my grateful sense of the kindness and hospitality of the Rev. John Gould, rector of Beaconsfield, as well as of the other members of his family, whose interest in everything relating to Burke, and sympathy with every effort to render his life more intelligible, deserve to be by me most cordially acknowledged. I should also wish to bear my testimony to the generosity of Mr. Peter Burke, barrister, of the Inner Temple, who, though himself the author of a volume on his illustrious namesake, with an absence of jealousy rare in similar circumstances, introduced me to the Rector and his family, accompanied me on one very pleasant expedition to Beaconsfield, and zealously aided me in tracing out the different localities associated with Burke's daily life.

whose joints were racked with rheumatism, he, as Mary Shackleton wrote,—

“ With pitying eyes,  
Mingles the healing draught, and sickness flies.”

He was not less ready to provide the amusement of his humble dependents, or to send on their way rejoicing any itinerant showmen or travelling artists who halted at Beaconsfield, and were sure immediately to make their appearance on his lawn. The strolling players, though no longer what Hamlet called them, the “abstract and brief chronicles of the time,” on whose good word the reputations of the great most depended, received from the squire at Beaconsfield all the welcome which the Prince of Denmark recommended courtiers and statesmen to give those strangely-sensitive and jealous representatives of the beautiful and the ideal, whose own habits, manners, and thoughts are frequently so shockingly real. As soon as they arrived, a large barn was placed at their disposal. Burke himself earnestly entered into all their little schemes to suit their tawdry scenery and dresses to the pieces they undertook to perform. His own clothes, and the clothes of Mrs. Burke, and of the whole family, were summarily laid under contribution, and several ludicrous tales have been told of the expedients to which he resorted, with gay humour, to equip the mimic kings, generals, and lovers, in a style not ridiculously unbecoming the characters they assumed. One evening the hero of the piece was to be dressed in a pair of white buckskin breeches; but no buckskin breeches of the kind were to be found in the scanty wardrobe of the company. Only one of his neighbours, old General Haviland, whose son afterwards married Burke’s niece, and who had himself seen some hard

service in the Seven Years' War, wore breeches of the kind absolutely required. Burke suggested to his brother to engage the General, then confined to his room, in a long conversation on his achievements before the walls of Quebec, and while the valetudinarian warrior was once more fighting his battles over again, once more slaying the slain, and showing how Quebec was won, the great statesman, orator, and philosopher himself ran off with the enthusiastic General's indispensable buckskins.\*

This was long a favourite anecdote in the family. Burke himself, chuckling with delight, loved to relate it with all the attendant circumstances. His brother Richard, the bold and joyous, would burst forth into roars of laughter whenever the scene was recalled to his memory; and the mirth of all the great persons in the front seats when the buskined hero walked on to the scene, with the stolen buckskins carefully adapted to his figure, was doubtless the cause of much wonder to all the poor people who were on such occasions invited, to see almost the only glimpse of the great world of passion and of ambition they could ever get to see in their lives, imperfectly delineated under Burke's patronage in a barn near Beaconsfield.

Beaconsfield itself was then far more animated than it now is. Situated on an eminence, it probably, as its name implies, had been the station of one of those rude beacons which, in days when railways and electric telegraphs were never thought of, gave notice of the approach of an enemy. Through the town itself passes the broad highway of the western counties, coming from Uxbridge and running down to High Wycombe. The principal

\* Prior relates this anecdote somewhat differently, p. 204.

portion of the houses are built on each side of this great road, but two other streets branch off at angles, one leading in the direction of what was then Burke's estate, and the other leading to the more magnificent grounds and dwellings then belonging to Mr. Waller, of Hall Barn, the lord of the manor; and thus the town takes somewhat the form of a cross, with the old parish church and churchyard standing in the middle, and by its position forming the main feature of a rural scene, nearly from every point of view as suggestive as it is picturesque. In those days of postchaises, mail-coaches, and carriages of great noblemen drawn by six horses, Beaconsfield was a busy place. With the establishment of the Great Western Railway, however, and its branch lines, the occupation of the country town has gone. There are fine old inns, but the crowds of grooms and stable-boys, with their fresh horses at the door, ready for the highflyer, as it dashed up with horn sounding, harness jingling, and whip cracking, have vanished from existence. An air of desolation and vacancy pervades the great thoroughfare. The mail-coaches, with their red-coated guards and drivers, appear all to have madly rushed through Beaconsfield one day, and unexpectedly been swallowed up in some great convulsion of Nature; and as they have never more returned, the town does not know what to make of it. It is a melancholy picture of a deserted village. Every object brings vividly before the mind the life of our great-grandfathers, but Beaconsfield seems not to know what hour of the day it is, and to be quite unconscious that the eighteenth century has passed away, and that the world is now far gone in the nineteenth. The meditating stranger disagreeably feels that he is stumbling over graves and walking

among shadows ; that ghosts of jolly landlords and rosy-cheeked postboys are like bats flitting around him as his feet echo in the silence and the solitude.

The sense of desertion and loneliness is more oppressive, because there is no resident landlord. In the last century, Hall Barn was inhabited by its owner, and Burke and his family, with the numerous visitors who came in the autumn to his house, naturally had much influence over the surrounding neighbourhood and the prosperity of the town. It is to be feared that Beaconsfield is now not prosperous. The old cottages, with their gable-ends, remain much the same as they were in Burke's time ; neither the number of houses nor the population appear to have increased. That population is, of course, composed almost entirely of men, women, and children brought up to the heavy drudgery of the open fields. No fairer specimen of a purely agricultural district could be found ; and yet poets and sentimentalists, who boast of the hardy virtues of country-people, and lament the vice and degradation in our great manufacturing towns, would learn, on inquiry, that the crimes most characteristic of fallen humanity flourish very abundantly among those unsophisticated peasants, whose lives are spent in cultivating the soil. In Burke's time I cannot but believe that, from his presence and other causes, the humble labourers at Beaconsfield were, morally and physically, in a better condition than they are in this reforming century. The spirit of reform, which has worked such miracles for other parts of England, has driven the unobtrusive village of Beaconsfield, with its dependent inhabitants, still further into the background.

But it is over Burke's own lands that the most melancholy change may be observed. His house, it is well

known, was destroyed by fire shortly after Mrs. Burke's death, and no portion of it has been restored. The visitor who remembers how the statesman delighted in his country home, with woods, gardens, and orchards around it, and crows flying over it, and what a cheerful and happy abode it was when inhabited by himself and his family, cannot look upon the site which is nearly all of it that now remains as evidence of what once was, without feeling saddened and sick at heart. The grounds are now almost waste lands, the apple-trees have all been torn up from the orchard, the walls of the house, even to the bricks and masonry, have been taken away; and it is only by the desolation and vacancy left after such ruthless spoliation that the existence and situation of the dwelling can be distinctly realized to the mind. A well which furnished the kitchen is still in perfect preservation, because it has been found useful in supplying cattle with water. With the same view to utility the stable, venerable as that where Windham used to put up his horse on his frequent rides down to Beaconsfield, not having been injured by the fire, has been kept in good order, and still shows on what an artistic and commodious plan the whole range of offices must have been. But the pond, which was just before his gates, and about which Burke had a lawsuit with the lord of the manor, is dried up. The iron gates themselves, which were cast in a very light and graceful style, have long since been removed, though one or two of their hinges, and two or three carved embellishments on the walls between which they were hung, may yet be discerned on a careful inspection. The wood to the left of the house, which is still pointed out as Burke's Grove, remains, indeed, so far as the trees,



many of which were planted by himself, are concerned, timber being of course valuable ; but the walk through which he sauntered leisurely on an evening, pondering on affairs of high import, while the setting sun threw its rays of burnished gold about his steps, has been almost choked up by grass and shrubs, and an ice and summer-house, in the form of a graceful temple, though only built out of rude logs, and to which he loved to retire as to a place for solitary meditation, has long ago been pulled down, and the spot can only now be traced by a large hole.

On returning by the ill-kept road to Beaconsfield, the indications of neglect and want of attention are still more painfully impressed upon the mind. The old church, sadly in need of repair, is a very interesting memorial of the past, though a most incongruous wooden steeple, which is said to have been erected under Burke's patronage, and elevated to where it now is while he was looking on and anxiously superintending the operation, cannot, even by those most indulgent to his memory, be said to add to the harmony of the venerable structure, or be at all worthy of the tasteful author of the *Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful*. Waller's handsome though weatherbeaten tomb, carefully railed round, is the most conspicuous object in the churchyard ; and seldom did Burke pass through the town with a stranger without alighting from his horse or carriage and paying a visit to the accomplished poet's grave. His own resting-place inside the little church is by no means so conspicuous. The plain marble slab on the wall gives no information as to the particular place where his body is buried. Just under the pulpit, to the right hand of the clergyman, is a large pew, in which Burke and his

family sat on Sundays ; his own favourite seat, near the door, and exactly in face of the divine who read the service, is still pointed out by the present rector ; the dark green lining, now worn, dusty, and discoloured, is the identical stuff which was there when Burke attended the church, and his grave in the vault of the family is partly beneath the pew which he then occupied. At each funeral the boards must have been taken up, and yet neither on them nor in the aisle to which the grave extends, nor on the wall facing the particular spot, is there a single word or sign to say that there the mortal remains of Edmund Burke actually repose.

This apparent absence of respectful testimony to the memory of the illustrious dead, in the church itself, increases the very dreary feelings which the site of his ruined habitation naturally inspires. After stepping from the churchyard to the door of the ancient and cheerful rectory, one little trace of Burke's presence there exists deserving of being remembered. In the library or sitting-room there is a large fireplace, in the old style, and on the right of the mantelpiece a mark is shown, said to be worn by Burke's elbow as he habitually leant for support on the slab every Sunday between the morning and afternoon service, when, as his custom was, he spent the intervening time with the clergyman of the parish, talking over the events of the week, the prospects of the harvest, and all the vicissitudes in the fortunes of the peasantry about Beaconsfield. That he was a tall man this apparently trivial indication of his country life very clearly shows, for few persons much less than six feet high could lounge perfectly at ease with one elbow resting on that mantelpiece.

Beaconsfield was in all its glory in 1785. That par-

ticular autumn was to Burke a season of almost complete relaxation. Since he entered political life there was, perhaps, no recess in which he had more absolute repose; the signal discomfiture of his party, and the defeat of himself and his friends, had this, at least, of satisfaction in it, that in extinguishing all present hope and reasonable expectation, it removed the pressing anxiety which necessarily accompanies an earnest politician when the struggle is imminent and the combatants are about to meet upon equal terms.

Two events alone can be selected as important enough for notice, as, at this time, diversifying his own private life. He had a lawsuit and he had a robbery.

He brought an action against the printer of *The Public Advertiser* for reviving the old and disgusting aspersions which had been apologized for on a previous occasion. A verdict for himself as plaintiff was returned, and the proprietors of Junius's great organ, of which the importance in the political world had recently much diminished, condemned to pay costs and a hundred pounds damages.\*

When the family awoke on the morning of the twenty-eighth of October, they found that the house had been broken open. The thieves were evidently thorough London professionals, for they had effected their object in the most scientific style. They had driven in a curricule up an avenue at the back of the house, broken up the gate of a field, left their horses and vehicle behind the hedge, and then, entering the orchard, had ambushed themselves under a pear-tree. Plate, jewellery, and other valuable articles made a rich booty. All the consolation Mrs. Burke received for the loss of her silver spoons,

\* See *Chronicle of the Annual Register* for 1784, p. 197.

fish-knives and soup-ladles was the sight of the traces the thieves had left of their feet under the pear-tree, where the grass was much trodden and torn, and the marks of the horses' hoofs and wheels of the vehicle in the avenue and the adjoining field. Burke christened it "the Curricie Robbery," and as such it was ever afterwards known in the domestic annals of Beaconsfield.\*

Silver spoons, fish-knives, and soup-ladles might, however, be replaced. Shortly afterwards Burke, and with him all England, sustained a loss for which no equally valuable substitute could be found. The news came to him at his country home, that Samuel Johnson was at last actually dying. The information was only too authentic: that rude but massive pillar of orthodox Toryism, after having been for months in a tottering condition, was at last tumbling from its base.

Burke, wishing much to see his old friend once more, went up to town, and called in Bolt Court with Dr. Burney. Several other gentlemen were present, and Burke expressed his fear lest the presence of visitors might be disagreeable to the invalid. "No, sir, it is not so," replied Johnson, "and I must be ill indeed when your company would not be a delight to me."† Thus, to the last, the Doctor testified that admiration of Burke which, notwithstanding political differences of the most decided nature, he had entertained ever since they became known to each other more than thirty years before. This sincere and friendly appreciation of the man whom he considered the most extraordinary of the century, is not the least pleasing circumstance recorded of the prejudiced moralist, and it is worth some attention in certain quarters, where it has become almost a cant to

\* See *Annual Register*, 1784, p. 202.

† Boswell.

praise Johnson in the most hyperbolical terms, and, not so openly, but not less equivocally to depreciate Burke. On leaving the sick room the statesman felt that he had seen his friend for the last time, and said to Dr. Burney, "His work is almost done; and well has he done it."\*

A few days afterwards, and Johnson was no more. To the last, he had been sedulously attended by that common friend of himself and Burke, Dr. Brocklesby, whose memory ought ever to be respectfully remembered by men of letters as that of the most genial and generous practitioner of a profession which abounds in so many illustrious examples of geniality and generosity.

After the funeral, Burke had at Beaconsfield again to prepare for the next political session. He spared a few moments to write a criticism to Miss Shackleton on her poem, which he had some little time before received, candidly telling her that there were a few imperfections in the verses, but expressing his acknowledgments for the choice of the subject and the real merits of the composition in the kindest and most delicate language. "For my own part I will not complain," said he, "that, when you have drawn a beautiful landscape, you have put an old friend of your father's as a figure in the foreground; nor shall I pretend that I am not pleased even with the excess of partiality, which has made him an object worthy of appearing in such a scene. The scene itself, fine as it is, owes much to the imagination and skill of the painter; but the figure owes all to it. You great artists never draw what is before you, but improve it up to the standard of perfection in your own minds. In this description I know nothing of myself;

\* Madame D'Arblay's Diary and Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 333.

but what is better, and may be of more use, I know what a good judge thinks it ought to be.”\*

The Christmas of 1784 found Burke busily reading Indian papers at Beaconsfield. Frost stripped all the leaves from the trees; the snow closed up his walks in the orchard and the grove; but the Christmas log blazed merrily upon his hearth; and the poor labourers found near the great house, stacks of firewood, at which they might help themselves at will, and in the kitchen beef and plum-pudding, with which they hurried with glad hearts down the icy road to their little cottages at Beaconsfield. The squire himself, however, has his eyes glancing far away over broad seas, to the peasant eating his scanty share of rice in the plains of Bengal; and to the captain-general of oppressive iniquity, who, haughty, successful, and confident, was about to leave India for those peerages, pensions, and seats in the Cabinet, which Major Scott had assured him were awaiting him at home.

\* See Poems, by Mary Leadbeater.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

1784-1786.

## ACCUSES HASTINGS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

BURKE took the earliest opportunity, after the meeting of Parliament on the 25th of January, 1785, of showing that he was still as resolute as ever in his determination to continue the warfare he had begun. The Royal Speech was a very brief one. Some hints were thrown out about adjusting the commercial intercourse between England and Ireland, and about an economical measure, regulating the emoluments of the public offices. The Opposition had, as a body, little to say against the Address, until Burke rose, and, regretting that not one word was to be found in the Speech referring to the affairs of India, concluded by moving an amendment, pledging the House to endeavour to prevent peculation of the Indian revenues, and, as far as they could be discovered, to punish all offenders. This amendment was rejected, as indeed its author expected it would be; it was, however, recorded on the journals, and had more significance than those who carried the Address without a division supposed it to possess.\*

Many days were again spent on the Westminster election. In these discussions Burke again never interfered, except on one occasion, when Fox, not being present, he

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iii. p. 88.

rose and defended his friend from Pitt, whose sarcasms were ungenerously levelled at the absent leader of opposition, for an illness which the Minister insinuated to be only political, though Welbore Ellis, then in opposition, learnedly assured the House that Fox had sprained his "tendon Achilles," and could not walk across his room. This statement Burke confirmed.\*

The Opposition, as the oversanguine Minister learnt to his cost, had no reason to shun a contest on the Westminster scrutiny. For the first time even Pitt's majority failed him, and after the exhibition of much arrogance and injustice, he found himself compelled to allow Fox to be returned as Member for Westminster.

This contest had scarcely terminated, when Francis and Burke, acting steadily in concert, brought forward other motions for papers relating to Hastings's pecuniary transactions. The devoted Major Scott of course rushed eagerly and intrepidly into the breach. Burke, complimenting him on the zeal and ability he showed, put, in the form of a Parliamentary motion, the question whether the House was formally to understand that Scott spoke merely as a private Member of Parliament, or, as he had in the select Committee acknowledged himself once to be, still the authorized agent of the Governor-General? The Major rose in a fury. He was proud of being the agent of Hastings. He gloried in the connection. Was not Burke himself, though his cousin, the agent of the Rajah of Tanjore? Had he not in that capacity transacted business with the Chairman of the Company? The Major concluded by saying that he was of a good family, that he had plenty of money, and that he thought he had as much right to become a Member of Parliament as Burke or any other person.

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxv. p. 10.



Burke assured the Major that he was not, nor had ever been, the agent for the Rajah of Tanjore. He was not surprised at the imputations that were thrown out against him for his endeavours to see justice prevail in India ; for some men naturally could not imagine how any one could take an active part to promote the interests of another without being paid for his services. It was no disgrace to be an agent. He had acted as the agent of New York, and in that character had privately given to Government advice which, had it been taken, might have been the means of yet preserving America as an integral part of the British empire. He had supported the Rajah of Benares, the Nabob of Oude, the Rajah of Tanjore, and all the princes and potentates of India whom he believed to have been injured and oppressed ; he had supported them because, being a man, nothing relating to mankind was indifferent to him ; but he had never been, and never desired to be, paid for what he had done. "I am at one time," said Burke, "reproached with my poverty ; at another, for the enormous wealth I am supposed to have received from India. The gallant Major may boast of his fortune. God knows that I have not many pecuniary resources to pride myself upon ; but were they ever so great, I should not count my riches my honours."\*

Major Scott and his troop of Indian Nabobs of course shrugged their shoulders and laughed derisively at this declaration. They were conscious of no such philanthropic disinterestedness in themselves ; how could they believe it to exist in another ? It was not in this manner that their enormous fortunes had been acquired in India. It was not in this manner that they had procured the means of buying great landed estates ; of keeping large

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxv. p. 162.

mansions in town ; of loading their tables with magnificent plate ; of becoming members of aristocratic clubs, in which some of them in their youth had served as waiters ; of making their appearances with bags and swords at court ; of sitting in Parliament for rotten boroughs, which they had openly purchased ; and of receiving occasionally a nod of recognition from the young Minister whom they supported by their votes, and with whom they in return had, through the clever agency of the unhesitating Dundas, arrived at an implied understanding that they were to be protected in the enjoyment of the spoils they had mercilessly wrung from the princes and people of India.

When the habit of receiving presents had been first declared illegal, the servants of the Company, who were eager to become rich, hit upon a new resource. They advanced money to the native princes, and endeavoured to obtain the guarantee of the Indian Government for the security of their loans. This abuse had long flourished most luxuriantly in the presidency of Madras, where the Nabob of Arcot had borrowed at the most enormous usury, and become the creditor for several millions to some obscure Englishmen, who, when they went out to India, had scarcely funds to provide themselves with an outfit. That those debts were far from being honourably contracted, had been generally allowed. Even Sir Thomas Rumbold, himself by no means the most scrupulous of Indian officials, had condemned the greater portion of them when he was Governor of Madras. They had been condemned in the different reports of the Secret and Select Committees. They had been condemned in each of the measures for the government of India which had been successively propounded by different statesmen, and even in Pitt's

Bill, which had lately become law. People were therefore surprised to learn that one of the first acts of the new Board of Control had been to recommend the Directors to admit those claims without investigation, and to order a fund out of the revenues of the Carnatic to be set aside for their liquidation. Even some of the proceedings in favour of the Nabob's enemy, the Rajah of Tanjore, recommended by the Directors, were reversed by the new ministerial board: territories which they commanded to be restored were again directed to be withheld; and some four hundred thousand pounds of pretended tribute were admitted as a debt due to the Nabob from the Rajah of Tanjore.

The Opposition took this matter up very warmly. It was a tempting opportunity to show that the virtuous young Minister was not sincere in his economical professions or his Indian reformatations; and that he was, in fact, leagued with the perpetrators of those abuses which Parliament had branded by resolutions, and against which the public was violently prejudiced.

On the twenty-eighth of February, Fox moved for official papers referring to the Nabob's debts. He was seconded by Francis. Dundas tried to defend his own flagrant inconsistency with his usual plausibility, readiness, and insincerity; and he was answered by Sir Thomas Rumbold, of whom he had formerly been the accuser, and who now suddenly reversed their respective situations. The debate seemed about to end, when Burke, with much emotion depicted on his countenance, rose, and began that great published speech on the Nabob of Arcot's debts, which, on a subject of mere figures, glows with the most brilliant and poetic language, and is equally remarkable for its minute knowledge of pecuniary details and for the

depth of its philosophic insight into the complex condition of Eastern life. Even in his own works it would be difficult to find a nobler composition than his picture of the Carnatic and the invasion of Hyder Ali; and we should look in vain through the production of other statesmen, historians, or rhetoricians for anything worthy of being placed by its side. He was stimulated by the remembrance of the warfare Lord Pigot had carried on at Madras against those very creditors of the Nabob of Arcot; and the enmity with which they regarded William Burke, as the supporter of the Nabob's enemy, the Rajah of Tanjore, was not without its influence in calling forth the utmost exertions of his eloquence. To those who knew not the powerful motives that were animating him, his speech seemed mercilessly long; and, indeed, there can be no doubt that it was not so successful in delivery as some other of his great orations had been. As he sat down, several Members rose to reply; but the House was fairly tired of the subject. Loud cries were raised for the division. The result showed the extreme weakness of the Opposition, and the fear many even of their supporters had of treading again on that dangerous Indian ground, which had opened beneath the feet of their friends and swallowed up the majority of the last Parliament. Fox was only followed by sixty-nine Members; and Burke's great speech, of which the facts were undenied and undeniable, had produced no apparent effect.\*

Most men would have been completely discouraged. He, however, never thought of abandoning the position he had taken up; perhaps such a defeat only nerved him with more resolution. He knew that some of those In-

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxv. p. 259.

dian Nabobs, who had grown rich with the connivance of the Nabob of Arcot by participating in his crimes, were among the vilest of mankind; and their mysteries of iniquity, into which he had been initiated by the confidential correspondence of his beloved and trusted relative, he was determined to lay bare.

Richard Atkinson and Paul Benfield stood forth pre-eminent as the unscrupulous agents of any ministry that would protect them in their extortionate gains. Their names have been perpetuated by Burke, in his oration, as twin brothers in avaricious injustice; and their history clearly illustrates the pernicious system against which he was resolved to wage unceasing war.

Richard Atkinson was known as the most unscrupulous and the most favoured contractor of the Government. As a Member of Parliament and political agent, he was the subservient tool of the ministry; and he was, in return, rewarded with the lion's share in the series of improvident loans, which brought so much obloquy on Lord North's administration when it was tottering to its fall. As Paul Benfield's agent, Atkinson had, in the days of the Coalition, earnestly supported the Company and all the obnoxious officials; and at the late dissolution he had not only contested the city and was within two or three votes of defeating Sawbridge, but he had constituted himself a kind of general manager of elections for the ministry, and had been the means of powerfully contributing to the return of several candidates. With the triumph of Pitt, Atkinson also, notwithstanding his defeat for London, found himself in the full stream of success, which might have borne him ultimately, as it did so many others of Pitt's devoted supporters, to the House of Lords; had not, within a few months of this

time, the life of this great contractor been suddenly cut short at middle age.

Paul Benfield was, on the whole, a still more remarkable person. The son of a land-surveyor at Cheltenham, he had early been shipped off to India, where, as assistant-engineer, he had acquired a little reputation; and, what he valued much more, a little money, in erecting some public works. Paul saw a career open before his enterprising genius. He found himself in possession of that golden lever, still, however, as yet a small one, with which he determined to move the world. Abandoning his profession as a military engineer, he, in concert with some native banker, set up as a money-lender; and, in 1773, advanced to the Nabob of Arcot, sums at the most exorbitant interest to invade Tanjore. The revenues of a portion of the Carnatic were made over to him, as to a kind of farmer-general, in order that he might reimburse himself, when unfortunately Lord Pigot arrived as Governor of Madras, and stopping Mr. Benfield in the full tide of his prosperous career, refused to allow him to profit any further by his assignments of territory, on the ground of their absolute illegality; and also suspended him, as a disobedient official, from continuing his valuable services for the benefit of the Company and of himself. Lord Pigot, however, found Paul and the rest of his contracting confederates more powerful and daring than he supposed; and the virtuous and reforming Governor was destined to be imprisoned by his own Council, and in their custody to close his gallant career. Mr. Benfield observing that, notwithstanding this signal achievement, he was not restored to his former dignities, and that even a Sir Thomas Rumbold looked upon him as a somewhat disreputable character, turned his eyes to-

wards his native country, and for a time disappeared from India. With plenty of money, he engaged in deep electioneering speculations, bought rotten boroughs, and was said by Burke to have returned no less than eight Members at the general election of 1780. Mr. Benfield and all his tail of course emulously supported Lord North and the American war; but Lord North's ministry, in spite of the Benfield brigade, at last succumbed, and Paul and his rotten boroughs were involved in the Minister's calamities. He set off again for India in the same vessel which took out Lord Macartney as Governor of Madras; but Lord Macartney, after spending months in the enjoyment of Mr. Benfield's society on the high seas, thought that if he permitted him to establish himself at the seat of government, the fate of Lord Pigot might possibly overtake another Governor. Paul was therefore ordered to pursue his labours at a respectful distance, until the retirement of Lord Macartney, during this very year, when, grateful for services rendered, the new Board of Control, at the head of which was Dundas and Pitt, sent out special orders to allow Benfield again to reside at Madras; and he then spent his time in realizing, as creditor of the Nabob of Arcot, that fortune which, in defiance of Burke's opposition, they secured to this man, who had gone to India without a sixpence and without friends; and yet who, without having filled any high office and without rendering any efficient service to India, returned, by their indulgence, at length to England, worth at the least four hundred thousand pounds. He returned to England, to buy a beautiful country-seat in the county of Hertfordshire, a magnificent mansion in Grosvenor Square, and an extensive estate in South America. But not satisfied with these substantial acquisitions, he

for a time, launched out into a wide sea of speculation, commanded through the funds the money-market of Europe, and had the commercial credit of England in his keeping. At length, however, justice overtook this unscrupulous creditor of the Nabob of Arcot. The crash came; his house failed, his effects were seized, and he was himself obliged to fly to France, where he lived for some years in poverty, died a beggar, and was indebted to a subscription of the English residents for a funeral and a grave.\*

Pitt's conduct in allowing Benfield and his associates to enrich themselves, to the amount of several millions, at the expense of the revenues and inhabitants of the Carnatic, only appeared to Burke more iniquitous in contrast with his economical policy at home. The Minister brought in a Bill insisting on a minute inquiry, and penal inquisition into all the emoluments of the public officers, in violation, as Burke maintained, of Magna Charta and the first principles of justice; and making, even in the most favourable light, the saving only of a few thousands a year, far less indeed than were conferred on Paul Benfield alone. The occupants of the Treasury Bench laughed when the orator on the Opposition side called on the clerk to read that portion of the Great Charter beginning, "Nullus liber homo capiatur vel imprisonetur." Burke said he was not surprised that Pitt's young friends should regard what had been read no more than an old ballad like Chevy Chace.†

Mr. Rolle, one of the Members for the county of Devon, reminded the House of the case of Powell and Bembridge. He was one of the constant assailants of

\* See Wraxall's Parl. Mem., vol. i. pp. 263-269.

† Parl. Hist., vol. xxv. p. 372.



Burke, always ready at a sign from the Treasury bench to greet him with a rustic Tally-ho, or a stentorious imitation of a donkey's braying. But for his sins against the Opposition in general, and Burke in particular, Mr. Rolle, quite unknown to himself, was just on the point of being made immortal in *The Rolliad*. In this critical poem from the wits of Brooks's, as well as the accompanying production, the Probationary Odes, the King, Pitt, Dundas, Thurlow, Jenkinson, and all the minor supporters of the Ministry were keenly ridiculed with the happiest political satire. If wit could have given the Opposition the victory, unquestionably those specimens would have rendered them victorious. From the nature of such compositions their point becomes blunted by time, as the objects of their satire disappear from the political scene : yet even now it is impossible for any one, with a moderate knowledge of the political characters of that period, to read without a hearty laugh some passages of those poems in which the weakness, knavery, and absurdity of the Ministerialists are so cleverly caricatured. Even the thick cuticle of many a 'Tory country-gentleman winced under the keen weapons of the Whig satirists : political success in the shape of places and pensions was, however, a very effectual balm. Mr. Rolle, dull, plain, and heavy, might roll sternly those eyes of his, which were not the most brilliant, at his supposed assailants, Fitzpatrick and Sheridan ; but the ludicrous eminence to which he was elevated as the descendant of Rollo, the Norman invader, and the undisputed heir of the *Rolliad*, did not place him above being made in good time Lord Rolle, by the grateful Minister in whose cause he had so severely suffered. The flagrant corruption of the days of Walpole

and Bute, or even the apparently milder, though not less pernicious form which flourished under the King's friends and Lord North, were not practised by the young statesman who is described in *The Rolliad* as at this time the new Octavius of debate, pert, solemn, and sullen. Yet were the honours, dignities, pensions, and titles very satisfactory substitutes: a Rolle eventually became a baron; a Benfield became the still greedy possessor of hundreds of thousands, and the political machinery of the government being thus lubricated moved easily along.

Before going down to Beaconsfield for the Easter, Burke, after sending his speech on the Nabob of Arcot's debts to the press, made a last attempt to prevent the ministerial scheme from being carried into effect. He wrote a letter to the Lord Chancellor, remonstrating against the proposed arrangement, and offering, should his Majesty hold a council for the reconsideration of the question, to attend, and while ready himself to submit to the most severe examination, lay before the Ministers disputed facts and recorded evidence sufficient, as he pledged himself, to prevent them from indorsing such iniquitous claims. Of course the letter produced no effect. Thurlow, though not at all prepossessed in favour of Pitt, could only look upon Burke's epistle as an unseasonable impertinence, and, on throwing it aside with a curse, leave the national justice to take care of itself.\*

Burke's pertinacity in interfering with the general course of the administration, was only too frequently set down as impertinence. The loss of the American colonies had deprived England of her penal settlements, and

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 33.

the Ministers were perplexed by that problem, which cannot even at the present time be considered settled: What to do with the convicts? A scheme was entertained for sending some of them to an island in the river Gambia, on one of the most unhealthy portions of the African coast. Burke hoped that the Government had no design of transporting those unhappy men to a place where, he finely asserted, "all life dies, and all death lives." The deprivation of life, he said, was mercy, in comparison. The Speaker prevented him from proceeding at the time; but on returning to Westminster after Easter, he was horrified on being told that a ship laden with seventy-five of those wretched convicts was just dropping down the river. He again immediately invoked the interposition of the Minister. Pitt interrupted him, as assuming facts that were unsupported by evidence; but he would not be put down. "I call," said he, "upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer. His Majesty, by his coronation oath, has sworn to execute justice in mercy. He is the trustee of that solemn pledge. The gaols are crowded far beyond all former precedent. There is a house in London which contains at this time precisely 558. I do not mean the House of Commons, though the numbers are alike in both; but the jail of Newgate. Contagious distempers may ensue; and on every view of the subject I again invoke the interposition of Parliament." The House was deeply affected by this appeal to their feelings; even the ready and sarcastic Minister was silenced. No answer was given to Burke; but his interference was effectual. Botany Bay became the chosen spot, where to the present day the penal settlements have been maintained, until, from causes happily very different from the Ame-

rican war, the Government has been again compelled, not as yet very successfully, to find some other substitute for the simple system of transportation which had prevailed since the days when Burke humanely hindered the river Gambia from being as famous in the annals of our criminal jurisprudence as Botany Bay became.\*

Very shortly after this affair, on the eighteenth of April, Pitt made his third, last, and most celebrated effort at Parliamentary Reform. The Liberal supporters of the movement out of doors looked forward to the day with great expectation ; much correspondence had passed on the subject in the newspapers ; though, whatever were the Minister's ostensible professions, it may be doubted whether he himself had the sanguine hopes of success which many of his admirers encouraged ; or even whether, judging from his subsequent conduct, he desired to see his motion supported by a majority. Something, however, it was necessary to attempt, at least to save appearances ; and this Pitt undertook in a crowded House. The plan involved what many even of those who voted on the same side, considered a most objectionable feature, the purchase of the franchises of thirty-six small boroughs before they could be conferred on the counties, and it proposed to give the power of voting in counties both to copyholders and freeholders. Dundas, who had hitherto been decidedly opposed to all Parliamentary Reform, possessing the most accommodating conscience with which ever politician was blessed, came forward, in his bold, fluent, and apparently frank manner, and declared himself a convert to the scheme of his friend and colleague the Prime Minister. All his plausibility could not, however, convince the House of

\* Parl. Hist., 391, 431. Wraxall's Post. Mem., vol. i. p. 286.

his sincerity, and his appearance in the character of a reformer was greeted with loud and general laughter. Burke followed him in the debate, ridiculing his insincerity, and offering objections to Pitt's scheme so forcible, that even some of the Reformers admitted them to be unanswerable. It was all very well, he said, for gentlemen to follow the fashion, and praise the representation of the counties ; but that, for his part, he was not at all more favourable to a plan, of which its main principles were to add to the numbers of the country-gentlemen in the House, and to base the increase of the franchise on a theory which really led to universal suffrage.\* The division showed how little even the most powerful minister, with an immense majority to support him on the ordinary affairs of Government, could do when he advocated a cause against which his most devoted supporters were deeply prejudiced. At four o'clock in the morning, a hundred and seventy-four Members only followed Pitt into the lobby ; while, a majority of two hundred and forty-eight negatived a project which he was still considered to have much at heart.

In his celebrated commercial propositions relating to Ireland, the most important measure of the session, Pitt also offended many of his most attached supporters and some of the great manufacturing towns. Yet, in some respects, they deserved real praise. They were founded on the principle of reciprocity, and though crude and incomplete, were conceived in a generous and enlightened spirit. The ten original propositions, as they were first introduced into the Irish House of Commons, became, however, modified in England, to maintain the commer-

\* Parl Hist., vol. xxv. p. 469.

cial supremacy of the dominant country; some visions of seeking a revenue in Ireland, as had been so unfortunately attempted in America, flitted before the eyes of the Tories; and Burke warned them most earnestly against once more encouraging so dangerous and futile an illusion. Pitt promptly denied that there was the slightest analogy between the two cases, and, alluding to Burke's Irish origin, hoped that such language would produce no effect in his native country. Burke, in reply, sneered at Pitt for depending on Jenkinson, whom he had long considered the principal agent in every discreditable court intrigue, but whose knowledge of commercial details with other more powerful though not such creditable accomplishments, had become indispensable to the Minister. "I envy not," said Burke, amid the cheers of the Opposition, "the statue its pedestal, nor the pedestal its statue." He admitted that he had great affection for Ireland, but considered that his first duty was to England: the two duties, however, he thought it easy to reconcile, since Ireland ought never to be separated from England, but must remain under her protection.\*

But though he once or twice spoke against those commercial propositions, he did not take the most active part in the resistance to the scheme. Fox and Sheridan bore the brunt of the opposition, while Burke, it has been supposed, really approved of proposals which he did not very strenuously oppose. Such a conjecture, based on fact, would not be very honourable to him as a patriotic statesman. It is, however, entirely unfounded. His opposition, though not constantly repeated, was most decided. Ireland adopted the very objections he raised,

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxv. pp. 647-651.

and obliged the Government, after much exertion, at last to abandon the propositions. But Burke, with so much else to do, might fitly leave the work of detailed resistance to his friends ; for while the session was prolonged in order that the proposed terms might be fully discussed, a distinguished stranger, to whose appearance on the scene Burke was anything but indifferent, had arrived in England.

On the thirteenth of June, Warren Hastings set his feet once more on British ground. The next morning he travelled as fast as post-horses could convey him to London. Burke learnt that the man whom he had so frequently denounced as a criminal was now within his reach ; and that Major Scott and the old Indians openly boasted that he would never venture to bring his accusations to an issue. Everything seemed in Hastings's favour. The King smiled upon him ; the Queen was most gracious ; the Court of Directors quoted him as their highest authority ; the Board of Control gave him more than an official welcome ; people of the noblest rank flocked round him : proud, happy, and confident, and possessing, as he believed, after so much slander, the good opinion of his countrymen, what had he to fear ? How malevolent and how contemptible appeared the wild ravings of Mr. Burke ! And who was Mr. Burke ? The Indian interest sneered at him ; the supporters of the Ministry laughed at his threatened vengeance ; and men whose characters were far from spotless, virtuously shrugged their shoulders, and spoke of him as a bad man, as a very bad man.\* The uxorious Hastings hastened off to Cheltenham, to enjoy the society

\* See Hastings's letter to his late Secretary, Mr. Thompson, in Greig's *Memoirs*, vol. iii. p. 242.

of his sweet, his beloved, his elegant Marian, and learnt with some astonishment, impatience, and disdain, that this villanous Mr. Burke had lost no time in audaciously firing the first gun.

Four days only after Hastings had entered London, Burke rose and said, "I give notice that it is my intention to prosecute the inquiries into the late Governor-General's administration, and to support the charges I advanced in his absence. The actual session, however, being too far advanced to allow of my bringing forward the business before the rising of Parliament, I am necessarily compelled to postpone it until this assembly shall again be convoked."\* Major Scott curled his lip, for it appeared to him an empty menace and a mere excuse. But Scott resolved that Burke should not escape from the disgraceful position in which he appeared to be involved; the Major himself would take care to remind him of the promise he had given and the vow he had undertaken.

Before thoroughly embarking in Hastings' prosecution, Burke, accompanied by his son, again set out for Scotland. He had been, at the expiration of his year of office, a second time chosen Lord Rector of Glasgow University, and he a second time attended in person, to be installed in his academical dignities. His reception was as enthusiastic as on the previous year; nothing was omitted which it was thought could do honour to the orator and statesman; and it was highly creditable to Scotchmen, at the time when Dundas's long supremacy was being established, that, so far as Burke was personally concerned, all political prejudices were laid aside. After the ceremony, he went northward into the High-

\* Wraxall's Post Mem., vol. i. p. 339.



lands. This excursion was extremely agreeable. "I have," wrote Burke to his friend Shackleton, "had a very pleasant tour over a considerable part of Scotland, and have seen the works both of God and man in some new and striking forms."\*

Richard Burke took leave of his father, near Edinburgh, for a short visit to the Continent. The ship in which he sailed from Leith to Holland was obliged to put back into a port near Berwick, whence it again sailed on the fifth of September. The very next day a violent hurricane blew on the Dutch coast, and the disasters it occasioned were reported in the newspapers. Burke was observed to be anxious for the fate of his son. His uneasiness occasioned a foolish paragraph, which went through the different newspapers, stating, that young Richard was supposed to have been lost in the late storm while crossing over to Holland. The Shackletons wrote to Burke in great alarm. Richard was, however, then safe at Paris, and all cause of anxiety had been completely dispelled. Burke, in thanking Shackleton for his friendly solicitude, admitted that he had been affected by the danger of him in whom all his hopes and wishes were centred. "I was myself not ill," said Burke, "though, to confess some weakness, I was not so composed and steady as I ought to have been." Alas, the day may come when the father's fortitude will be put to a more severe trial!

The remaining two months of the year 1785 were spent by Burke in quiet at Beaconsfield. Every paper of that most diffuse Indian correspondence, which, in the style that had become characteristic of the service, appeared never to have beginning, middle, nor end, was

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 37.

welcomed by him and eagerly perused. He had formed to himself a true and brilliant picture of that strange Eastern world. While sitting in his study among his books, or walking in his grove as the autumn leaves were rustling around his feet, he was in spirit by the shores of the Hooghly, where the Hindoos buried their faces in the water after witnessing the sacrilegious execution of their great high-priest Nuncomar; amid the domes, minarets, pilgrims, apes, and bulls of Benares, when Cheite Sing swung himself down from his palace and fled across the Ganges as all the population of the sacred city was rising in insurrection against the imperious Governor-General; in the valleys of the Rohilcund, where a race of brave warriors were inhumanly slaughtered by the mercenary English sword; and at Fitzabad, where the ladies of the Princess of Oude, that hidden treasures might be extorted, were designedly deprived of the common necessities of life, and their stewards put to the torture. And again and again he asked himself, shall such crimes receive no punishment? Shall the perpetrators of all these infamous misdeeds be welcomed at the Court as the most meritorious of pro-consuls, applauded by his countrymen as a wise and upright statesman, and rewarded with the highest honours by a gracious Sovereign, while I, for denouncing his iniquities, and devoting years of the best period of my life to wind into the mysterious labyrinth of his misgovernment, am to confess myself a malignant calumniator of a glorious character? Shall my dear son, when I am no more, have to blush for his father as a slanderer of other men's virtues? Shall posterity, when they read my works, and perhaps applaud their genius, admit that their author brought forth charges which,

being manifestly false to all the rest of mankind, he dared not attempt to substantiate? Shall these things be? Not if the energies of one man can save himself from such lasting disgrace, such permanent dishonour!

To judge fairly of Burke's conduct on this question, which he deliberately regarded as the most important of his life, the motives which actuated him ought to be thoroughly understood. He did not believe it possible to convict Hastings. He did not believe that he would be supported in a single charge by a majority of the House of Commons. He did not believe that the business would ever proceed so far as to an impeachment in the House of Lords. He thought himself bound in honour to take the judgment of the Commons on some of the acts he had reprobated, but at the close of this year he never hoped for more than to see his accusations supported on the division by a respectable minority; and this seemed to himself a sufficient justification and an honourable retreat. All the insinuations that have been made about him being impelled by vanity to deliver great orations at the head of the Commons in Westminster Hall are therefore at once set aside. All the conjectures about his wishing to avenge on Hastings the downfall of the Coalition Ministry, and thus retrieve the fortunes of the field, are not more supported by facts. He confessed that there never was a ground more unfavourable for a great party struggle. Pitt's majority had been chosen on an Indian question, and the Whigs themselves who had escaped from the late massacre looked with distrust, if not with fear, at the renewal of a conflict which had been politically so disastrous. Even the great leader of their party, Charles Fox, though he had thundered against Hastings in the House of Commons, was

by no means anxious to engage in a laborious prosecution of the late Governor-General, and he expressed great doubts whether Burke could succeed in proving all the accusations he had thrown out in the heat of debate. Francis and Burke were the only two eminent politicians determined to proceed: Francis, because he saw the opportunity of wreaking his vengeance on his deadly foe; Burke, because having really been horrified at the cruelties which were undoubtedly inflicted on the natives of India during Hastings's administration, and having given unrestrained utterance to his feelings in Parliament, he thought that the business was one peculiarly belonging to himself, and one which he could not now relinquish without a sensible loss of reputation. The prosecution was indeed from first to last not so much the work of the Whig party, as a party, as of Burke alone. He supplied the labour, the knowledge, the earnestness, so indispensable to the cause; and it was he alone who brought Hastings, as a culprit blushing with shame, to his knees at the bar of the Lords.

In December he wrote to Francis his whole thoughts on the business, and particularly on Fox's unwillingness to commit the party irrevocably to the issue from which he apprehended, what Burke himself certainly expected, a complete defeat. In this letter Burke draws a line of demarcation between himself and the other members of his political connection, and speaks of Francis and himself as bound directly to act on their own resolutions, without consulting those who might support them on the division. His inmost thoughts are laid bare in this confidential communication to his sympathizing associate, and they show how little he anticipated the extraordinary course the prosecution would

take in the ensuing session.\* He was at the time expecting a visit from Fox and Francis, at Beaconsfield, and looked forward with great interest to the result of their joint deliberation. Two days before Christmas, he had also drawn up the charge on the Rohilla war, and sent it off for Francis's inspection, while Hastings at the same time was so blindly unconscious of what was in preparation, that he wrote of Burke as a man who was not worthy of occupying a moment of his thoughts, and about whose intentions he had not for months condescended to inquire.†

It is evident, however, that at the beginning of the year 1786, as Members repaired through roads almost blocked up with snow to Westminster, the leaders of the Opposition were not determined on what course they should take about Hastings's business.

They had many other subjects of disquietude. Strange rumours were prevalent about a marriage contracted between the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert; and Fox had, just ten days before the performance of that ceremony, written a letter of remonstrance to his Royal Highness, more remarkable as a composition for common sense than for high morality, and had received in reply a written assurance that no such intention, as was immediately afterwards carried into effect, was for one moment entertained. The party had also been deserted by Robert Eden, afterwards the Earl of Auckland, the friend and secretary of the Earl of Carlisle during his Irish Lord-Lieutenancy. His knowledge of trade had, during the discussions of the Irish commercial propositions, been as serviceable to the Opposition as Jenkinson's had been to the Ministry. His figure was tall; his manners were

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 38.      † Gleig, vol. iii. p. 270.

polished; he was graceful, intelligent, animated; and, with more geniality, had some resemblance in character and disposition to William Gerard Hamilton. But, being the father of a large family, he had several daughters, one of whom, after the political connection between Eden and the Ministry had been cemented by time, was the object of more attentions from Pitt, during his visits to Eden's country-seat, than this cold-blooded Octavius was known to have offered any other young lady, though the hopes which the family entertained of forming an advantageous matrimonial alliance with the powerful Premier were not destined to be fulfilled.\* Eden, as the first act of his apostasy, was to repair to Paris to negotiate a commercial treaty with the French Government; and his loss was sensibly felt by his late associates, since it testified to the world, like the similar desertion of Wedderburne in 1770, that the Ministry was established on a firm foundation. When the house is falling, the rats fly from it. Those unpleasant animals were one after the other leaving the stately mansion of the great Coalition. The Ministry, whatever might be the fortune of particular measures, was in the full tide of success; and it is not suprising that, when the Whigs assembled at the Duke of Portland's two days before the meeting of Parliament, there were some very decided opinions expressed against undertaking the prosecution of the late Governor-General.

Parliament opened on the twenty-fourth of January with a mild and conciliatory speech from the Throne. The Address in the Commons was seconded by a new orator, a friend of Pitt, and Member for Devizes, Henry Addington. His father, a country physician, had been

\* Wrazall's Post. Mem., vol. i. p. 439.

the medical adviser of Chatham, and was considered particularly skilful in the treatment of persons afflicted with insanity ; and the grave, formal, but not unpleasing son of the mad-doctor, as Canning would opprobriously term him, became not only Speaker of the House of Commons and a Viscount, but, in one of the darkest seasons of our history, was, by royal perversity and parliamentary subserviency, allowed to become Prime Minister of England. In the debate the Opposition reserved their keenest sarcasms for Eden, who sat on the Treasury bench, shrinking under the lash. Men will endure much for money ; but no man of high spirit would undergo the open and apparent humiliation that the renegade was compelled on this evening to suffer before departing on his mission to Paris. Against Hastings not a word had been said, and the debate was just on the point of terminating most pacifically, when Major Scott officiously rose, begged to remind Burke that Hastings had been some months in England, and called upon him to produce, at the earliest possible moment, the charges which in the last session he had pledged himself to bring forward. The Major had evidently heard of the reluctance of Burke's friend to engage in the prosecution, and resolved to triumph over his antagonist. Burke was personally ready enough to accept the insulting defiance that had been so foolishly given. "I shall," said he, "tell the gallant Major an anecdote of the Duke of Parma. He was in a similar manner called upon by Henry IV. of France to bring his forces into the open field and instantly decide their disputes ; but he announced with a smile, that he knew very well what to do, and was not come so far to be directed by an enemy. This I answer to the challenge of Mr. Hastings's agent."\*

\* *Annual Register*, 1786, p. 94.

No retreat was now possible. Even the men who at Burlington House had been opposed to undertaking the business, had no choice but to support Burke in the pledge he had given. There was then to be a formal prosecution of Hastings. The subject excited the greatest interest both in Parliament and throughout the metropolis; the greatest of Indian statesmen was to be formally accused for misconduct in office, by the most eloquent orator in the House of Commons. On the seventeenth of February, in a curious and crowded House, Burke seriously began operations by moving that the resolutions of May, 1782, censuring Hastings, and advising the Directors to recall him, might be read. This was done. He then again rose, and regretting that a business of such importance had fallen to him, when persons of infinitely greater abilities might have undertaken the task, and particularly Dundas, who had proposed the very resolutions that had just been read, he for the information of the young Members gave a detail of the proceedings of the House with regard to Indian affairs up to the time at which they had arrived, examined the different methods of trying Hastings as a criminal, declared himself adverse to a prosecution by the Attorney-General, an application to the King's Bench, or a bill of pains and penalties; and concluded by moving for some papers relating to presents and pecuniary transactions as evidence for one of the articles which he intended bringing forward to justify an impeachment of the Governor-General before the House of Lords. Windham seconded the motion. It was supported by Fox. Major Scott was as boisterous and as defiant as usual, stoutly maintaining that he had refuted every charge Burke had made in his published speech on the Indian Bill, and that



he would refute every accusation that could ever be made. Burke in reply said, that the gallant Major's declaration reminded him of Bobadil in the play: "'Twenty more! kill them! Twenty more! kill them too!'" Pitt and Dundas animadverted on Fox and Burke; but with regard to the object of the impeachment, professed a politic neutrality: their conduct would be entirely directed by the case Burke might make out. Several motions for papers were carried; but the debate was interrupted by the Speaker's illness.\*

On the twentieth the business was again pressed forward. Other papers were requested; the Ministerial professions of impartiality were repeated; Major Scott once more declared himself ready to second the accuser's application for any document, for any means of information, since every inquiry must redound to Hastings's innocence; and Burke, in answer to an intimation from Pitt, declared himself ready, whenever he should be called upon, to specify any of his charges.†

Some days afterwards he made another motion for papers respecting the Mahratta peace, on which Dundas had based Hastings's highest claims to statesmanship. The Ministers were far from being in a compliant mood. On the strange plea, that the production of those papers would show to the native princes how they had been systematically set against each other, both Pitt and Dundas, supported by the earnest, moral, and conscientious Wilberforce, refused to agree to the motion; and Burke, on carrying it to a division, was defeated by nearly two to one.

The confidence of Hastings and his friends seemed then fully justified by circumstances. Both Dundas and

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxv. p. 1060-90.

† Ibid., p. 1095.

Pitt had emulously praised his peace with the Mahrattas : they had, with all the powers of the Government, rejected Burke's motions for the criminating documents ; they had, even while ostentatiously declaring themselves neutral, obviously taken up a hostile position towards him, and all the advocates of the impeachment. After a few more attempts it seemed clear that Hastings's enemies must abandon the field. Two or three veteran Parliamentary tacticians, however, took a different view of the state of affairs. No person knew the character of Dundas better than his old boon companion and colleague, Rigby, and he, though now in a sadly dimmed condition, shrewdly prophesied that the Ministers, notwithstanding their apparent friendliness, would give up Hastings at a later stage of the proceedings.\*

All, however, seemed well. Major Scott supported the Minister against Francis and Burke on every division ; and no word reflecting injuriously on Hastings fell either from the lips of Pitt or Dundas.

About this time Francis moved for leave to introduce a measure explaining and amending Pitt's Indian Bill. He supported his motion by a powerful and remarkable speech, which may still be read with interest and profit. Its condemnation of the double Government rises almost to the height of prophecy. But the noble eulogium which it contained of Burke is, perhaps, still more memorable, since it is in the very language and spirit of Junius, and may be compared with a similar panegyric passed by that powerful and anonymous writer on Lord Chatham. It is as true in fact, as it is pathetic in sentiment and beautiful in style. "The relation," said Francis, "in which I stand to my right honourable friend gives him every

\* Wraxall's Post. Mem., vol. ii. p. 57.

claim over me that belongs to authority and justifies submission ; it is that of the being that is instructed to the being that instructs him. Sir, I am not here to pronounce my right honourable friend's panegyric ; nor, if I were equal to the task, would I now venture to undertake it : it would lead me to reflections that would utterly discompose me,—to the recollection of virtues unrewarded, and of veteran services growing grey under the neglect, if not ingratitude, of his country. If fame be a reward, he possesses it already ; but I know he looks forward to a higher recompense. He considers and believes, as I do, that in some other existence the virtues of men will meet with retribution, where they who have faithfully and gratuitously served mankind,

‘ Shall find that generous labour was not lost.’ “\*

Francis's motion was, of course, rejected. But the defects of their Indian Bill were admitted by the Ministers themselves ; for a very few days afterwards, Dundas himself introduced a bill explaining and amending that measure, which those who knew India best, Burke, Francis, and even Hastings, vehemently condemned. Nevertheless, most of Dundas's amendments were not by Burke considered to be improvements. Some of the inquisitorial proceedings respecting the fortunes acquired in India, proceedings which were loudly complained of by the whole body of Eastern officials, were considerably modified ; but the principal alterations went to render the Governor-General despotic. He was to fill up at his discretion any vacancy that should occur in his Council. His decision was to overrule the opinions and votes of the majority of the Board, at which he presided. In his person was really to be invested the whole

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxv. p. 1230.

authority, the whole administration of the Eastern empire.

When the House went into committee on these amendments, Mr. Broughton Rous, one of the members for Evesham, took the chair. Having spent a considerable portion of his life in Bengal, this gentleman had much information on Indian matters, and as member of the Select Committee had sat by Burke's side in his earlier Asiatic investigations, and contributed his share to the production of the first report. He subsequently withdrew himself from the inquiry, alleging that the Committee was becoming the instrument of personal attacks; and having thus, according to Burke's idea, insulted those whom he deserted and betrayed, he went over to Pitt, and accepted the substantial reward of the Secretaryship to the new Indian Board. The sight of his old associate in the chair, on this evening, was to Burke highly mortifying. "Little did I ever imagine," said he, "that I should live to see you, Sir, seated at that table performing the part assigned you on the present occasion. I lament that the aid which you formerly lent me, when acting together as members of the Select Committee, should now end in the erection of a whispering gallery for the Board of Control, which demands auricular confession. Armed indeed as that Board will be by the powers which this bill confers on it, we shall witness a perfect imitation of the ear of Dionysius, so detested in antiquity. This bill is a raw-head-and-bloody-bones, subverting Magna Charta." He went on to denounce the plan as an attempt to introduce, by the means of profligacy and hypocrisy, a complete system of despotism. The tones of his voice were more than usually loud; his manner was more than usually vehement; his language eloquent, imagina-

tive, rhapsodical. "An abortion of despotism, like an imperfect foetus in a bottle, is produced," said Burke, holding up his hands as though he were presenting the very object which he figuratively depicted to the eyes of his hearers, "and it is handed about as a show, till at length the child's navel-strings have burst, and a full-grown monster of tyranny is now brought forth on the table." A Shakesperian allusion to Dundas, who was familiarly called Harry, and to the train of hungry flatterers besieging him at the Board of Control, was not less bold and happy:—

"Then shall the warlike *Harry*, like himself,  
Assume the port of Mars; and at his heels,  
Leashed in like hounds, shall Famine, Fire, and Sword,  
Crouch for employment."\*

This speech excited more admiration than conviction. Fox praised it as an unequalled display of oratory and logic, and professed to wonder how Administration could answer arguments which to him appeared conclusive. Pitt dismissed them, however, with two sentences of that disdainful and ironical sarcasm of which he was so consummate a master, and which so keenly mortified and violently enraged his adversaries. "With respect," said he, "to the arguments of which mention has been made, I cannot pretend to say that I did not hear them; the manner and elevation of voice in which they were delivered rendering that circumstance impossible. But I confess that I do not sufficiently comprehend how they bear upon the question now before the Committee, so as to make them an appropriate answer." A few evenings afterwards Dundas also alluded to Burke's declamation against despotism, and while admitting it to

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxv. p. 1276. Wraxall's Post. Mem., vol. ii. p. 66.

May was appointed to hear the late Governor-General on the accusations Burke had made.

Members showed great curiosity to see a man whose name had been so frequently mentioned in the House, and who had in defiance of their votes and resolutions resolutely governed the British dominions in Hindostan. Nor did the appearance of Hastings disappoint those who thought most highly of his political abilities. His height was anything but commanding; his person was thin; and his whole figure seemed as though it had in early life been stunted in its growth. But there was dignity and self-respect in his manner. His forehead, completely bald, was high, and decidedly intellectual. His eye was calm, and in its brightness seemed to beam with placid strength. The lines about the mouth, with the thin compressed lips, seemed to express invincible courage and unswerving resolution. An amiable man the accused Indian statesman might not be; a good man he might not be; but even those who were most prejudiced against him, and even Burke himself, could not but admit that he had the great air of a great man. He looked like what he had been. He had for years made India bow before his unconquerable resolution. Though no warrior, his name had animated armies. Though by birth an untitled English gentleman, princes had laid their turbans at his feet, and humbly knelt before him in the dust. Though himself a mere proconsul of England, and in danger lest every one of his most important public acts should be disavowed and censured at home, he had virtually sat upon the throne of the Moguls, made his commands obeyed from Calcutta to Delhi, and caused all Asia to resound with his name.

The House of Commons, at the bar of which he now

presented himself, showed him much indulgence. He was permitted a chair. The son of Burke's old friend, Dr. Markham the Archbishop of York, stood by Hastings's side to render him any needful services; and, grateful for the kindness Hastings had shown to his offspring as agent of Benares, the prelate, like the rest of George the Third's courtiers, had espoused the cause of the late Governor-General with a real enthusiasm, which was on most occasions displayed so vehemently as to be scarcely compatible with the dignity of the episcopal character. The Archbishop was present in the place allotted to the Peers, and watched the proceedings with great interest. Hastings requested that he might be permitted to read his defence, and this application the Commons also graciously granted.

But the request was most injudicious. A mere written composition, as it has been justly observed, must, when read out aloud before an audience accustomed to the ablest extempore speaking, to the vehement logic of Fox, the dignified copiousness of Pitt, the sparkling wit of Sheridan, and the affluent eloquence of Burke, necessarily fall tame and wearisome upon the ears. After Hastings had read for an hour, his audience began to diminish; he himself became tired, and was obliged to call in his friend Markham's aid; and when five hours had been spent on the defence, Pitt moved the adjournment in a House of almost empty benches. The next day he resumed his somewhat ungrateful task, and on the following brought it at last to a conclusion. He was told that the House could dispense with his presence.

It was then moved that a sufficient number of copies of the defence should be printed for the use of the Members. Burke expressed his satisfaction with the motion.

With regard to the style of the defence, he said he was not at all surprised at it, since he had grown accustomed to it in the immense mass of Indian papers which he had perused. The defence indeed was not couched in the most respectful tone. Hastings seemed to consider that the East Indian Directors were his exclusive masters, and that with him and with the acts of his administration the House of Commons had nothing whatever to do.

His defence, such as it was, having been made, the next step was to ask the verdict of the Commons on the separate articles of the accusation. Of the whole series of those iniquities, one of the earliest and perhaps the most atrocious was the extirpation of the Rohillas. It had been condemned by a resolution of the House. That resolution had been moved by Dundas himself, who was then at the head of the Board of Control. It seemed therefore that, however much he had changed his opinions on men and things since the formation of Pitt's government, yet he could scarcely disavow his own acts and his own words, by refusing to vote for the charge as one of the articles of impeachment; and it might reasonably be expected that the Prime Minister would not on such a question separate himself from his most intimate friend. Burke most judiciously determined to move the Rohilla charge first.

A more than usual number of Members assembled early in the afternoon of the first of June. To render the duty he was to perform still more impressive when the time came for him to bring forward the charge, he requested a few moments delay, that the attendance might be commensurate with the importance of the subject. The request was granted, and he at length com-



menced in a House of which every seat had its occupant. His opening sentences were deeply affecting. After solemnly appealing to British justice, he took occasion to deny the accusation of being influenced by any mean, petty, personal motives. Five years, he said, had passed away since he had taken up the cause of India. During those five years, there had been every political change of administration ; but neither such vicissitudes, nor the retirement of summer, nor the occupation of winter, nor the progress of age, as evinced by the snow which nature had in the interval so plentifully showered upon his head, had cooled the anger which he acknowledged he felt as a public man, but which in a private capacity he had not nourished for a single instant. He then entered into an elaborate detail of the circumstances associated with the deplorable bargain between Mehemet Ali, the Nabob of Arcot, and the British Government, which resulted in the desolation of the country of the Rohillas and the extirpation of its people. This discussion was prolonged through two nights. Hastings was variously attacked and variously defended. Burke was ably supported by Fox. Lord North, sitting on the same benches, was assailed for supporting the impeachment of a statesman for whose misgovernment he was himself responsible by continuing him in office. Dundas, with equal though contrary inconsistency, refused to vote in favour of the charge, after himself being the author of the resolution in the journals condemning the Rohilla war. Pitt significantly remained silent, though, it was understood that the motion would not have his support. On the morning of the third of June, as the dawn of a beautiful summer's day was seen through the windows, Members loudly called for the division. The charge was defeated by a majority of nearly

two to one, between sixty and seventy Members only voting with Burke.\*

Surely now Hastings's friends might well congratulate themselves on a final victory. Burke might well hide his head with shame. What chance was there of reversing so signal an overthrow? The great accuser acknowledged that he was defeated; it was said that he would bring forward one or two articles more, as a matter of form, and, as seemed certain, should the opinion of the House still remain decidedly adverse to the impeachment, he would then abandon all further proceedings in so hopeless and invidious a cause.† Even in the House of Commons the immediate elevation of Hastings to the peerage was publicly spoken of; and it seemed most probable that he would soon take an active part in the administration of India. The King himself always spoke of him with gratitude and admiration. Thurlow, the Lord Chancellor, laughed at the scruples which had prevented Pitt from promoting Hastings to the honours of nobility, was ready himself to take the full responsibility of such a proceeding, and had some very important communications with the late Governor-General about Indian affairs, entirely independent of the young Chancellor of the Exchequer and First Lord of the Treasury.

The cause of the prosecution appeared hopeless, when on the thirteenth of June, immediately after the Whitsuntide recess, Fox brought forward the second article of the impeachment. It related to Cheyt Sing, the Rajah of Benares, whose treatment by Hastings was indeed sufficiently flagrant, though not so flagrant as the extirpation of the Rohillas. Being indeed more recent, Hastings's

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxvi. p. 91.

† Wraxall's Post. Mem., vol. ii. p. 131.

friends could not plead the lapse of time and ministerial condonation. However, they were confident of defeating the charge, and sanguinely calculated on the same support from Pitt and Dundas that they had received when the former motion was rejected. Shortly after Fox had sat down the young Minister rose. All eyes were turned towards him ; all ears hung upon his words. It seemed that he was about to give a decided negative to the charge. He strongly censured Burke ; he strongly censured Francis ; he strongly censured Fox. He talked much about his conscience. Then entering into an elaborate dissertation on the rights of the Zemindars and the nature of their allegiance to the paramount sovereign, he affirmed that Hastings was justified in calling upon Cheyt Sing for aid, and in inflicting a fine upon him for disobedience. But it was a question of degree. The fine was too heavy. Even the deposition of the Rajah after the revolution at Benares was just and necessary. The fine however being shamefully exorbitant, and constituting in fact a high crime and misdemeanor, Pitt declared that, without giving an opinion as to whether Cheyt Sing ought to be restored to his possessions or not, he would vote for the charge as a substantial ground for grave accusation against Hastings. At this declaration loud murmurs ran through the ministerial ranks. Major Scott was almost in hysterics, and said that it was impossible for him to express his astonishment at the declaration of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Some of the Minister's most devoted friends refused to concur in his decision and to follow him into the lobby. But his unexpected adhesion turned the scale in favour of the prosecution ; Fox's resolution was carried by a majority of forty.\*

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxvi. 91-115.

It was not merely among the Minister's followers and Hastings's friends that the inconsistency of Pitt's conduct appeared extraordinary. The Opposition and Burke himself shared in the general surprise. After the division he said, in allusion to the strange attack that Pitt had made on the promoters of the impeachment, and yet had concluded by voting with them: "The Chancellor of the Exchequer has accused me of want of diligence in carrying on the prosecution, and found fault with my charges. But as he has given me his vote this evening, I am satisfied to take one along with the other." The unexpected triumph had, as was observed at the time, rendered Burke more than usually complacent. Whatever might be the ultimate fate of the impeachment, his object had been attained, his justification was complete.\*

The Minister's conduct was not so easily justified. It still remains curiously conjectural and problematical. That Pitt and Dundas were jealous of the favour with which Hastings was received by the King, that they were determined to frustrate his anticipated appointment to the Indian Board, and therefore gave him up to the vengeance of the Opposition, are the motives which have been attributed to the young Minister and his astute and unscrupulous colleague.† Such motives are, however, so discreditable that they may charitably be allowed to remain in doubt; but, with the strange logic of political partisans, many of Pitt's admirers have thought fit to blame Burke for his ardour in prosecuting Hastings, though they have entirely overlooked the fact that for the impeachment, Pitt and many of Pitt's followers were as much responsible as Burke and his disciples on the Opposition benches.

\* Wraxall's Post. Mem., vol. ii. p. 142.

† Macaulay's Essay on Warren Hastings.

The session was far advanced, and many Members had left town. Burke was, however, still ready to proceed at once with the next charge, relating to the Begums of Oude, and Major Scott professed himself equally anxious to continue the proceedings. The day for moving the Oude charges was even appointed, when one of Hastings's defenders gave notice of a call of the House. That proposition was defeated; and the general feeling was found to be so strong against going on with a business of so serious a nature during the absence of so many Members, that Burke had no choice but to postpone the rest of the charges until the following session.\*

He had every motive to call forth all his diligence during the autumnal recess of 1786. Contrary to his own expectations, he had succeeded in one main article of his great accusation; the way was clear before him; it seemed certain that the impeachment would at length be voted by the House of Commons. On his return to the country he allowed himself no rest. All the papers on India that he obtained from reluctant Leadenhall-street were subjected to the most subtle analysis of his investigating intellect. The result was complete. He might be accused of prejudice; he might be mistaken. With ignorance, however, he could never be justly charged. If he erred, he erred with his eyes open. No effort had by him been spared to acquire the most ample information on every ramification and detail of the vast Indian subject; and the knowledge he obtained was so vast and extensive as never to have been surpassed, and, taking it all in all, and duly estimating the difficulties against which he had to contend, perhaps never to have been equalled by any labourer in the same field.

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxvi. p. 151.

But while his gaze was turned far away from Europe, the mighty revolution against which he was so eloquently to testify was steadily advancing. Great actors were departing from the stage they had trodden so long ; new characters were appearing ; all was changing. This August, Frederick of Prussia departed from the world in which he had long been the most prominent figure, and in which, unwittingly, he had powerfully stimulated the great movement that he could not have successfully resisted with all his veteran battalions, and which, even more than the mere military prowess of France, subsequently laid the monarchy of his successor low in the plains of Jena. A delusive splendour shone round the Court of Versailles, though the clouds were gathering above, and the first dull mutterings of the great earthquake might be heard below. The gaiety and the luxury of the refined capital were fascinating. But, notwithstanding the empirical efforts of so many statesmen, the condition of the finances had grown worse and worse, and utter bankruptcy at length stared both Louis the Sixteenth and his Ministers in the face. The affair of the diamond necklace was indeed over. Madame de la Motte had been infamously branded, and afterwards consigned to the Salpêtrière. Her dupe, the Cardinal de Rohan, had been disgraced. Her intended victim, the fair Marie Antoinette, had, in the judgment of all impartial persons, established her innocence ; but the impartial were then, as always, a minority, and the reputation of the illustrious lady had unjustly received a stain which was never to be effaced until the untimely white hairs of the widow Capet were sprinkled with her noble blood as her head fell beneath the axe of the remorseless guillotine. Mr. Eden, the renegade of the last December, had just

concluded his commercial treaty with France, from which he and Mr. Pitt augured such a brilliant prospect of peace and union between the two countries which had so long been inveterately hostile to each other, and of which the discussions in the earlier portion of the session of 1787 threatened to vie in interest with the prosecution of Hastings.

It was the great topic of the speech which his Majesty addressed to the two Houses of Parliament on opening the new session on the twenty-third of January, 1787. Like the Irish commercial propositions of the former session, this treaty with France was based on the principle of reciprocity, and it has been regarded as formally inaugurating, however imperfectly, a system of free-trade, and also a policy of friendship with France, such as during the last thirty years has been impartially supported both by Liberal and Conservative Cabinets. The admirers of Mr. Pitt have, indeed, generally pointed to the French commercial treaty as one of the most enlightened of his measures; and some of those who have been most devoted to the memories of Fox and Burke have regretted that on this subject their views appear to disadvantage in comparison with those of their Ministerial opponent.\*

In the debate on the Address Fox unequivocally showed his disapprobation of the whole plan. He had, he said, no confidence in the sincerity of France; he maintained that, in all the wars we had carried on against her, she had been the aggressor; he accused the Ministers of sacrificing to her the interests of our oldest and most national ally, Portugal; and he concluded by declaring he had no sympathy with "the French mode

\* See Moore's *Life of Sheridan*, vol. ii.

of talking," which the mover and seconder of the Address had introduced that evening for the first time into the House of Commons.\*

On that night Burke contented himself with giving notice that a fortnight afterwards the prosecution of Hastings would be continued. But in the subsequent discussions on the Treaty he argued against any French alliance more strongly even than Fox, and condemned the Ministerial propositions, not so much on mercantile as on political grounds, as delusive in the extreme. There was much genius in his speeches on the questions, and unfortunately there was also much intemperance. The warmth of his manner increased; his influence over the House of Commons diminished. Younger Members seemed to take pleasure in rebuking him, and affected to pity him, while they professed to consider his abilities and virtues worthy of all respect and admiration. This was humiliation, this was torture, such as he had never experienced even in the worst days of his opposition to the servile race of courtiers and King's friends; and with the consciousness of such powers and such disinterestedness as he had displayed, this treatment only rendered his temper worse, until he became, as some have asserted, almost savage. Those scenes injured no person but Burke himself. It would be painful to dwell upon them at any length. But it is necessary to the faithful delineation of this portion of his career that they should be clearly, though briefly, defined.

On the fifth of February Pitt moved that on the same day of the following week the Treaty should be taken into consideration. Fox strongly opposed the motion.

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxvi. p. 219-227.



“The Chancellor of the Exchequer,” said Burke, “with that narrowness which leads men of limited minds to look at great objects in a confined point of view, regards the Treaty, and wishes it to be regarded, as a mere commercial transaction. Such men, when in power, convert large cities into small villages; while those of a more noble and liberal way of thinking act on a greater scale and change small villages into great cities. The right honourable gentleman has talked of the Treaty as the affair of two little counting-houses, and not of two great countries. He seems to consider it as a contention between the sign of the Fleur-de-Lis and the sign of the Red Lion, which house shall obtain the best customer. Such paltry considerations are beneath my notice.” As a mere matter of commerce, he allowed that his view did not differ from that of the manufacturers who praised the Treaty; but it seemed to him a serious thing to give up our trade with Portugal for that of France, and to enter into the bonds of friendship with that power against which we had by nature been designed for the balance. Answering the observations that Pitt had made, Burke also characterized, with extraordinary vehemence and energy, the attack that had been made on Fox as gross, stupid, and miserable abuse, unseasoned by wit and unsoftened by satire.\*

This brought upon him the full wrath of the Treasury Bench. He was answered by Wilberforce, who made one remark which, with all his gentleness, was sufficiently provoking, and indeed almost rendered Burke furious. “We can,” said Wilberforce, “make allowances for the right honourable gentleman, because we remember him in better days.” This was only

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxvi. p. 358.

a transient quarrel between Burke and Wilberforce. However wide might be their political differences, they entertained, as it was natural they should entertain, a deep respect for each other. Both sincerely attached to the principles of the Christian religion, both imbued with an earnest love of virtue, and a desire to promote the welfare of their fellow-creatures by doing away with all injustice and oppression, they had positive bonds of sympathy which overcame all the negative repulsion of opposite party politics. To Burke it was a pleasing sight to see a young man of wealth and fashion devote himself, with a philanthropic energy, to remove the shackles from the feet of the African, and himself to set the example of genuine piety amid all the reckless dissipation and sceptical indifference of the age. It announced the approach of a better time, of a more earnest spirit, of a determination to grapple with the great moral and social problems of which his earlier contemporaries in the days of the Duke of Newcastle and Henry Fox had scarcely dreamed. To Wilberforce, on the other hand, Burke was a great and good man, at that time much misunderstood and depreciated, and almost as unaccountably neglected. It was Wilberforce's delight every session from this period to give an annual dinner to Burke; and on these entertainments, in which morals and religion more than politics were the subjects of discourse, the young and zealous champion of virtue and Christianity always looked back with the greatest satisfaction.\* At these plea-

\* "I had," wrote Wilberforce in his Diary, "peculiar pleasure in his dinners with me, as an evidence of our perfect harmony. He was a great man. I never could understand how he grew to be at one time so entirely neglected. In part, undoubtedly, it was that, like Mackintosh afterwards, he was above his audience. He had come late into Parliament, and had had time to lay in vast stores of knowledge. The field

sant parties Burke frequently looked sad and harassed. The days when he seemed to his departed friend, Dr. Johnson, a model of cheerful equanimity were over; the new generation, then entering vigorously into public life, knew him not. His reputation for eloquence and for political philosophy could not be increased; but it was natural that it should produce envy among the rising men who were pressing forward. Their sympathies were not with him; their aspirations were not his aspirations. In those debates on the French commercial treaty two men on his side of the House especially distinguished themselves; and their influence in the Whig party was henceforth to be extremely prejudicial to his authority. A time was fast approaching very different from that when his counsels were listened to with deference by a Sir George Savile and a Lord Rockingham; he had no weight at all with a Sheridan and a Grey.

Charles Grey, whose leadership of the Whig party was to extend to the days which are remembered by the present generation, spoke for the first time with his political friends against the French Treaty. His father had been an enterprising general on the side of the British Crown during the American war; and his vigour, courage, and resolution had been especially approved by George the Third. His son was trained in another school, and was to leave behind him a far different reputation; and yet it may be that to the last the family-likeness was in some measure preserved. Though consistently sympathizing with the great Liberal cause on the Continent and in England, and powerfully support-

from which he drew his illustrations was magnificent. Like the fabled object of the fairy's favours, whenever he opened his mouth, pearls and diamonds dropped from him."—*Wilberforce's Life*, vol. i. p. 159.

ing every great Liberal movement at home and abroad, Charles Earl Grey ever remained in heart and soul an aristocrat. The great measure of Reform which has been associated with his name, was by him believed to be an aristocratic measure, and was supported by him as an aristocratic measure. He was the very antithesis of a democratic politician. He was said to have been mainly influenced in attaching himself to the Opposition by the fascinations of the Duchess of Devonshire. His first appearance was looked forward to with much interest, and fully justified the most sanguine hopes. He started prosperously in a career which he trod with honour for almost two generations. That that influence over the Whig party was, however, always beneficial, it would be perhaps too much to affirm. Though the tendency of the age was democratic, and they professed to conduct a democratic movement, yet the Whigs, as a party, became, under his leadership, more aristocratic and exclusive than they had ever previously been ; and this oligarchical spirit became in our time a habit, maintained by inferior imitators of their late chief, to the great detriment of the party and the Liberal cause. Such a spirit received no countenance from Fox, who was all openness and suavity. But it suited Grey's colder and more calculating temperament. Graceful and dignified, sonorous in voice, correct in language, lofty, equable, and severe, like Pitt he seemed to stand haughtily aloof from his associates, disdaining to ask their advice, sympathy, or thanks ; and this deportment, sometimes perhaps pardonable in a great Conservative Minister, seems less warrantable, and is certainly less politic, in the leader of a Liberal Opposition.\* It only too much justified the bitter remark of

\* See Wraxall's Post. Mem., vol. ii. p. 220.

Burke in his old-age, that there were certain aristocratic politicians who considered themselves born to the hereditary leadership of the whole democracy, and would not leave even the mere offal to the poor outcasts of the plebeian race.\*

Among the men then in the vigour of their career, perhaps, however, Sheridan had indirectly but not less unequivocally contributed to render Burke's position in his party less influential than it had ever previously been. To political knowledge, earnestness of principle, moral character, and indeed everything which tended to give weight to a statesman, Sheridan had no pretensions whatever. But he was a consummate master of the light and pleasant style of oratory that is always listened to in an assembly of which the majority of its members enter for mere amusement or as a means of local distinction, and not to take upon themselves the cares of governments and empires. An Irishman, an orator, and a man of wit and literature, he had for a time sought Burke's friendship with great assiduity, and requested his advice in language of the most respectful deference. As he was struggling forward against men who looked upon him as an intruder into a society which they thought he was not entitled to enter either by character, pursuit, or position, Burke's countenance was of great importance; and Sheridan knew and acknowledged it to be so. "Take the trouble," he wrote, "to give me that advice and counsel which I must be an idiot not to know the value of; and which I declare, without a particle of compliment, I shall always feel as the truest act of friendship and condescension you can honour me with."†

\* Letter to William Elliot, Esq.

† Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 11.

Four years had passed away since that letter had been penned ; and in those four years Sheridan had won a first place in the party. He was the companion of Fox. He was the adviser and associate of the Prince of Wales. At Devonshire House his wit and urbanity rendered him pre-eminent, and in the House of Commons, never being troubled by any unseasonable earnestness, he never exhausted the attention of his audience, and was frequently listened to when Burke was in danger of being coughed down. He no longer either sought or followed Burke's counsels, and to Burke himself he began to entertain feelings which did him little honour. The theory has been started that Burke was jealous of Sheridan.\* It would be idle to refute such an imputation ; there was little in Sheridan of which Burke could by any possibility be jealous ; though from indications extending over many years it would not be difficult to show that Sheridan was indisputably jealous of Burke.

Just at this period Sheridan attained the summit of oratorical fame. He was on ground where Burke was most willing and eager to usher him, and on which Burke would have been the last man to envy the laurels that the wit and dramatist so fairly won. In the midst of the discussions on the French Treaty the prosecution of Hastings was resumed, and Sheridan brought forward the charge relating to the Begum Princesses of Oude. It was on this occasion that he delivered the speech which, though scarcely preserved at all by the reporters' skill, has been handed down by tradition as the finest ever delivered in Parliament ; and which, if it were to be judged by the effect on all present, noblemen, and strangers, as well as Members, must have justified its

\* Moore's Life of Sheridan, *passim*.

reputation. They burst forth at its conclusion with one simultaneous mark of approbation, as unusually as appropriately applauding him as a first-rate actor with clapping of hands.

The other charges against Hastings were brought forward, if not with the same eloquence, at least with equal success. Unsupported by Pitt and Dundas, his friends were found to be but a small minority, and almost at every stand they made they were completely defeated. Though Burke did not take the most prominent part in every discussion, he supplied all the information, and on him devolved the heaviest portion of the labour. His tongue, his pen, his intellectual acquisitions were always at the service of the Opposition; he was the general directing every movement, and ready to advance himself wherever the conflict was at the hottest and when his friends were pressed the hardest. In some of these long debates on Indian affairs, his addresses were admirable both for eloquence and for temper; and in others, while all the eloquence remained, temper was entirely found wanting. On one occasion he rose again and resumed his argument after having spoken, and after another Member had followed him in the debate. He was met by loud cries of Spoke! Spoke! Spoke! He persisted in moving the adjournment of the House. In vain Members remonstrated. In vain the Speaker interfered. A general storm of coughing at last hindered the voice of the impetuous orator from being heard. "I rise," said Burke, "in support of the eternal principles of truth and justice, and those who cannot and dare not support them are endeavouring to cough them down." Shouts of Order! Order! came from two hundred lips. Dundas terminated the scene by declaring that had he been, as he was not, the right ho-

nourable gentleman's enemy, he should have wished him to have acted exactly as he had done that evening.\*

Some days later, when Windham brought forward the charge against Hastings respecting Fitzoola Khan, the Rohilla Chief who had escaped from the ruin and desolation of his country to receive from the hands of the unscrupulous Governor-General treatment of equal injustice though not of equal violence, Major Scott of course again vehemently defended Hastings, particularly affirming that no complaints had been made against him by the natives whom he was accused of plundering, and that even at Benares, the scene of one of the most glaring of his alleged iniquities, only very recently temples had been erected to his memory. Burke's answer was admirable. A great authority has stated that in his opinion the manner in which Burke at the moment met Scott's allusion to the temples was the finest combination of wit and fancy ever couched in a parliamentary reply.† “As for the temples,” rejoined the orator, “I know nothing to the contrary, and I am not inclined to question the fact. But the Hindoos erect temples to different kinds of characters: to the good and guardian deities, whose benefits they thankfully received, and the malignant and evil spirits, whose enmity they deprecate. The Committee is not without evidence to judge whether it would be as a good or an evil spirit that Mr. Hastings would figure in the Indian mythology; or perhaps the temples were gratefully raised to the guardian deities for having at last delivered them from a monster they had so long feared, and under whose persecuting spirit they had so much suffered. *Quam delecta templa!*”

\* Parl Hist., vol. xxvi. p. 751.

† Macaulay, in his Essay on Warren Hastings.



The House on both sides laughed heartily. Unfortunately at this period it was seldom that the brilliant sallies of Burke were received with such general admiration and applause.\* As charge after charge was voted, the propriety of the general question of the impeachment was variously discussed. The most judicious of Hastings's friends confessed that he had committed many questionable actions; but they also forcibly urged his great public services. Burke, in answer to them, argued that general merits might be put in extenuation of general criminality; but that a set-off could never be pleaded against a pointed, positive, and direct criminal charge. When the time approached for taking the Report of the Committee on the charges into consideration, it was necessary to bring this question of a set off to an issue. Hastings himself took the initiative. With singular want of judgment he altogether abandoned the defence set up by his friends, and in a letter which Major Scott read to the House of Commons, declared that, should the Report of the Committee be received, the vote for the impeachment ought necessarily to follow, and he would be as anxious as his prosecutors to be brought to trial. Even those who thought the Indian statesman meritorious as a public servant, notwithstanding the doubtful nature of some of his public acts, were by himself deprived of all excuse for opposing the impeachment.

The several resolutions having been read and agreed to, Burke moved that a Committee should be formed to prepare articles of impeachment. This was in accordance with the advice of Pitt, and in opposition to that of Fox, who maintained that after the Report had been received nothing further was necessary but at once to go to the

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxvi. p. 776.

bar of the House of Lords, and accuse Warren Hastings of high crimes and misdemeanours. Francis even at this stage of the proceedings had a significant intimation of the feelings of the House with regard to himself, for notwithstanding all the support of the Opposition, when he was placed in nomination as a member of this Committee, a division was called for, and he was rejected by a majority of more than two to one.\* A few days later he opened the charge respecting the revenues of Bengal, and entered into an elaborate vindication of his past life, and especially of that part which related to his hostility to Hastings. There was much dignity and energy in his address. Even those who listened to him with strong disfavour, and were repelled by the hesitation of his manner, could not but admire the independence and spirit which seemed to be displayed in his speech and to be characteristic of his life. His allusions to the abuse which had been showered upon Burke and himself by the defenders of Hastings, received much illustration by a ludicrous account which the *Morning Herald* had just given to the world. Major Scott had for some time been a regular correspondent of that journal, and had paid the usual scale of charges for the insertion of letters and paragraphs in defence of his principal. But Scott became at last so scurrilous and violent that the editor of the *Morning Herald* was compelled to interfere and decline any more contributions from the intemperate Major. With his usual judgment, Scott then accused the editor of having received large sums from him, for which no equivalent service had been performed. The editor retorted by publishing, in three columns of the paper, the sums paid for each and every one of Scott's insertions, in the

\* *Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxvi. p. 894.

regular form of a tradesman's bill. The document curiously illustrates the condition of journalism in that age. Burke and his friends were highly amused at some of the items. There was for attacking Mr. Burke's veracity, five shillings and sixpence; accusing Mr. Burke of inconsistency, nine shillings; attempting to ridicule Mr. Burke, five shillings and sixpence; and thus the account proceeded day by day, with Burke's name by far the most conspicuous in most of the details. He might well despise such weapons, and allow them to fall harmless and unresented from his shield.\*

The charge moved by Francis was carried by a smaller majority than any of the preceding articles. Still it was carried. The Report of the Committee was considered, and the articles read a second time. At length on the tenth of May, Burke formally moved that Warren Hastings be impeached of high crimes and misdemeanours. Consistently with the declarations Hastings had made, even Major Scott, on the separate articles being adopted, voted for the general question of the impeachment. It was carried without a division. Immediately afterwards the high-minded and much-respected Mr. Frederick Montagu moved that Burke should at once proceed to the bar of the House of Lords, and in the name of the House of Commons and of all the Commons of Great Britain, impeach the late Governor-General of Bengal, and acquaint the Lords that articles would shortly be exhibited against him, which the Commons would make good. Accompanied by a great majority of the House, Burke undertook this office at their Lordships' bar, and in the most solemn manner impeached Warren Hastings.†

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxvi. p. 917.

† Ibid., p. 1149.

Another article relating to misdemeanours in Oude was afterwards added. Subsequently Burke moved that Hastings should be taken into custody by the Sergeant-at-arms; and the accused was taken into custody accordingly. Burke was then ordered to inform the Lords; and the message he delivered at their bar. Hastings was then taken into custody by their Black Rod, ordered to find bail for his appearance when called upon, given time to prepare his defence, and permitted to have counsel. A few days afterwards the remaining articles of his impeachment were agreed to by the Commons, and were by Burke presented to the Lords. The session came to an end; but it was understood that early in the following year the great trial of the late Governor-General would take place in Westminster Hall, before all the most august authorities of the land, and supported by the most brilliant galaxy of orators that had ever shed lustre on the proceedings of the British Parliament.

In the interval between the beginning of what was to be so arduous a labour in Westminster Hall, and the termination of those laborious struggles for the impeachment in the Commons, Burke, inspired as he said by a sudden fireside thought, and accompanied by his son Richard, went this autumn to Ireland. Twenty years had gone since he last visited the country of his birth; a whole generation might be said to have passed away; and Ireland had herself in a certain sense become free. His friend Lord Charlemont, whom he had known in early manhood, was now like himself grown old; and on both their heads the grey hairs were abundantly displayed. Burke looked on this fine specimen of the Irish nobleman, who had been so influential in working out his country's deliverance, with affection and pride. Their

dear and honoured friend the late Marquis of Rockingham, whom they both so much lamented, was not forgotten in their private conversations. To his memory Lord Charlemont, at his beautiful country-seat Marino, erected a monument, for which Burke wrote the inscription, testifying most truly and elegantly to the virtues and integrity of that common friend, and the most disinterested and straightforward of politicians. Burke took his son to Ballitore, and showed him the school still flourishing in the third generation, as it had been when he and his brother Richard were first entrusted to Abraham Shackleton's care. They also visited the Blackwater, and all the scenes associated with Burke's childhood. Few of the elder relations whom he had known in those past days were then living, and few of their descendants had prospered in the world. All whom he met were however received with joy ; and the careworn statesman seemed once more a happy child. Young Richard too attached himself devotedly to the poor kinsfolk of his father, and afterwards sent them privately all the ready-money he could at times spare, to relieve their necessities. A few days spent at Lord Kenmare's, near Garret Nagle's, terminated Burke's excursion, and he left Ireland for ever.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

1787-8.

## THE GREAT ACCUSER IN WESTMINSTER HALL.

CONTRARY to what had been the general practice in the preceding years of Pitt's administration, Parliament was summoned for an autumnal session. Continental affairs occasioned this unusual proceeding. The Stadtholder of Holland had been deposed; his wife, the daughter of the new King of Prussia, had been arrested; and that sovereign, under the encouragement of England, and in defiance of French remonstrances, invaded Holland, and summarily restored the Prince of Orange. There was bustle; there was preparation in the ports of France and England; and it seemed that the prophecies of the Opposition in the English Parliament would be completely fulfilled: that the new treaty of commerce would be annulled before it could come into operation, and this newly-contemplated French alliance be completely broken amid the clash of arms. With the restoration of the Prince of Orange as an accomplished fact, the danger however passed away; and his British Majesty informed his Parliament that he had come to an amicable understanding with the King of France, and that their fleets would be both reduced to the same pacific scale at which they stood when the year began.

The Ministerialists were delighted with this bloodless achievement of the English Government. This was the first time that the young Minister had seriously contemplated war, and the spirit of his foreign policy was loudly applauded by his friends. He was indeed, they said, the son of Chatham. His genius for war was not inferior to his domestic administration. Notwithstanding the humiliations of the American contest, France had once more quailed at the name of Pitt, and England had again resumed her natural influence in Europe. Even the Opposition were not prepared to deny that these praises of the Ministerial chief were deserved; and they applauded the policy of vigorously supporting Holland against France as a genuine Whig policy, which had been pursued in the most glorious periods of our history. Though Burke did not speak in the debate on the Address, he took an occasion a few evenings afterwards to declare his approbation of the Minister's conduct in renewing Continental connections, and in counteracting the influence of France. It may, indeed, be observed that France, as a monarchy or as a republic, was equally the object of his jealousy; and that at no period of his life, from any sentence he ever spoke, or any line he ever wrote, did the plausible doctrine of a French alliance receive from him the slightest countenance. Many will attribute his language on this subject to the most bigoted prejudice. It must be remembered, however, that Europe was not then living under the treaties of 1815, and that the possibility of a permanent alliance with France is not even yet under all circumstances absolutely certain. It is difficult, so far as Burke's own views are concerned, to find much difference between them in 1787 and in 1797 when he was sinking into his grave. If this was a preju-

dice, it was one which he was never ashamed to avow ; and it was undoubtedly rooted deeply both in his understanding and in his heart.\*

With this single exception of indorsing the Ministerial policy on Continental affairs, Burke at this period exclusively confined himself to the great business of the impeachment, which was fast advancing to its final destination in the House of Lords. Everything, however, was far from going on as he wished. Hastings, on the meeting of Parliament, sent, as he had been ordered, his answer to the charges of the Commons to the Upper House ; it was by the Peers formally communicated to the representatives of the people, and a Committee was appointed to consider it. Pitt proposed Burke to be one of the Committee. Burke immediately afterwards nominated Francis, when, to his surprise, Hastings's friends, with the support of most of the Ministerialists, objected to Francis being on the Committee, and succeeded on a division in rejecting him by a considerable majority. As this was immediately preliminary to the appointment of the managers for conducting the impeachment, and the members of the one Committee were understood to compose the other, it showed that a powerful section of the House was averse to make Francis one of the agents for the prosecution. Burke, while lamenting the decision at which the majority had arrived, announced that on a subsequent day a motion would be made to appoint Francis one of the managers of the impeachment.†

On the eleventh of December, when the Committee for considering Hastings's answer to the charges, were appointed the managers for the impeachment, Fox moved

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxvi. p. 1273.

† Ibid., p. 1314.



that Francis should also be added to the list of managers. He was supported by Windham in a speech of great ability, and distinguished by all the peculiarities of his subtle, refined, and graphic eloquence. Francis, it appeared, had been the rival of Hastings; they had met in mortal combat: therefore Francis was not fitted to be one of the late Governor-General's prosecutors. But surely, Windham forcibly argued, this was to confound the duties of an accuser with those of a judge. Impartiality was the very essence of the judicial character, but it was not necessary that an accuser should be free from resentment. What was wanted in him was zeal; it was of little consequence whether that zeal had originated from public or private motives. In answer to Windham, Pitt weakly replied, that, however gentlemen might reason on the subject, there was a feeling against appointing Francis, who had certainly been the enemy of Hastings and had met him in mortal conflict, one of his public prosecutors; and on this feeling Pitt declared himself opposed to the motion, which, notwithstanding all Burke's eloquence, was decidedly negatived.

He was bitterly mortified at this defeat. Francis was his right-hand man; and at the eleventh hour, at the moment when the prosecution was about to commence in the House of Lords, he found himself deprived of the public co-operation of his great assistant, who possessed all the local information which ought to be ready as point after point would arise in the course of the trial. Before the final decision, he had written most earnestly and pathetically to Dundas, imploring him and Pitt to allow Francis to be one of the Committee of Management. Francis was, he told them, his chief support, his natural

support, his friend, his associate, in this public business. He was willing to owe to their generosity and compassion what they could not grant him from justice and policy. At all events he would not be wanting to his friend; nor would he, he plainly told the Ministers, calmly acquiesce in seeing a gentleman of merit most atrociously and shockingly stigmatized by a vote of the House of Commons. Entreaties and menaces were, however, both thrown away on Dundas and Pitt. Dundas replied a little contemptuously, though with all the external forms of respect: "Neither Mr. Pitt nor I doubt of your having persuaded yourself of the importance of Mr. Francis for the situation you urge him to be placed in; but knowing as much of the subject as we conceive ourselves to do, we must be of opinion that your partiality for your friend has led you to view the subject in too exaggerated a light. You are not deprived of the aid of Mr. Francis. He is not entitled to the estimation in which you hold him, if he will be induced from any personal considerations to withhold his assistance from the other managers of the prosecution."\* Burke was suffering from illness and overwhelmed with business; but he did not allow Dundas's letter to remain unanswered. "That Mr. Francis," he wrote, "might give us some secret assistance is true; but if he cannot act as a manager, he could never give it in the emergency of the instant occasion; and your experience will point out to you the consequences of seeming to be at a loss upon a trial. But I must confess I see, and think on recollection you will see, some other difficulties. To acquiesce in stigmatizing a person as the worst of mankind, and at the same time to call for his assistance, appears to me

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 68.

not quite decent, nor quite consistent. To act towards him as a man of distinguished ill qualities, and expect from him an heroic self-denial, and virtues almost supernatural, are things to my poor understanding not quite reconcilable." This heroic self-denial and supernatural virtue Francis was, however, called upon to exercise. A letter was written to him, signed by every one of the managers, and by Burke prominently as chairman, calling upon him not to withdraw his aid to the prosecution. It was the composition of Burke, and if flowing eloquence and delicate flattery could have reconciled Francis to the disappointment he had undergone, this epistle, addressed from the Committee-room of the House of Commons, and dated the eighteenth of December, 1787, would have been amply sufficient. "Our sole titles for your assistance," it was stated in the letter, "are to be found in the public exigencies and in your public spirit. Permit us, Sir, to call for this further service in the name of the people of India, for whom your parental care has been so long distinguished, and in support of whose cause you have encountered so many difficulties and dangers."\* Francis, of course, acceded to the wishes of his friends. Though not one of the managers of the impeachment, and therefore prevented from himself personally bringing forward any charge against the enemy whom he so bitterly hated, he remained at Burke's side, and eagerly seconded him in the efforts he made to bring Hastings as a criminal to punishment. It is true that the work which had been cut out for Francis personally in the impeachment fell of course, as Burke apprehended, to himself; and the burden was no trifling addition to the immense load he had already taken upon

\* See this Letter in the note to the Parl. Hist., vol. xxvi. p. 1334.

his shoulders, and which would have prostrated all energies but his own.

The thirteenth of February, 1788, was the day appointed by the Lords for the commencement of the great trial in the result of which Burke was so deeply interested, and in the prosecution of which he was to take so prominent a part. The first month of the new year was of course spent by him in still more indefatigable preparation than any preceding period. Ordinary political business, the mere details of opposition, he left to his friends ; and scarcely interfered at all in anything but what had some relation to the trial of Indian delinquents. The prosecution of the Indian Chief Justice, Sir Elijah Impey, had again been brought before the Commons : but Burke, with his hands already full to overflowing, could not be expected at such a time either much to encourage or render much assistance to any other laborious prosecution. Already however the propriety of proceeding by the mere technical rules of evidence, as used in ordinary courts of law, had been questioned by the Opposition and defended by the Ministerialists ; and the House showed a leaning to mere legal routine rather than to the enlarged principles of jurisprudence, by which, as Burke maintained, such great state prosecutions in the name of the Commons of England ought alone to be conducted. How far, asked he, can papers whose authenticity has not been proved furnish matter of proof? The rough, surly, and independent Kenyon, then Master of the Rolls, replied, " Where disputes arise the law will be pronounced from the woolsack, and whatever is so pronounced must be regarded as law." In this authoritative declaration Burke refused to acquiesce. He said, " I have contended, and successfully contended, against the unanimous opi-

union of the judges. If I think their opinion wrong, I will again contend against their determination. The learned gentleman appears to me to hold their decision in much too high a veneration. He is, I believe, eagerly looking to become one of that body. I hope however that he will continue some time longer in his present probationary state, performing legal quarantine for the advantage of his health and the constitution." This sally against Kenyon, who was known to be waiting for the retirement from the woolsack of the great Chief Justice, Lord Mansfield, then full of years and honours, and venerated by the younger lawyers as an oracle of legal wisdom, produced much laughter. In a very few months Kenyon attained the dignity he desired; and Burke's allusion to the anticipated elevation was not speedily forgotten.\*

The time fixed for the trial rapidly approached. To Burke this was the great act of his life. In his other struggles against injustice and oppression he may have been more successful; in many he may have won more applause; but it may be stated without hesitation that there was no single act of his life to himself so important, and the success of which he had so much at heart. In proportion to the interest he felt in this cause, and the part he had to play in it, was his anxiety as days slipped away and the inevitable hour came. He had addressed many audiences; the philanthropic zeal which animated him might uphold him throughout the performance of his arduous task; but even he acknowledged that he "felt a little sickish" on the eve of appearing before such an assembly, to plead, as he phrased it, the cause of Asia in the presence of Europe.

The trial of Warren Hastings is one of those noble

\* Wraxall's Posthumous Memoirs, vol. iii.

historical episodes which must ever be regarded with the deepest interest. From whatever point of view it is contemplated, the scene is singularly brilliant, and appeals powerfully to the imagination. The great act of the impeachment itself was a ceremonial at once solemn and imposing, carrying the mind back into far distant centuries, when the mere foundations of the constitution were being laid, and our noble system of popular freedom was slowly and imperfectly developing itself, amid scenes of bloodshed, strife, and oppression, which had little analogy indeed with the progress of the eighteenth century and the teachings of its philanthropy. An impeachment by the House of Commons of an Englishman for acts of cruelty and injustice exercised over the population of India, was a proceeding of which our ancestors could never have dreamed. The audience was composed of all that was illustrious in rank and intellectual eminence in the British empire. The Peers who were to judge of the guilt or innocence of the accused, were not merely an hereditary aristocracy relying on prescription and the virtues of their ancestors for pre-eminence ; many of them were distinguished as orators and statesmen, to whom senates listened with respect ; as eminent judges, who after a long career at the bar had been engaged in administering justice between man and man, with a purity and impartiality such as had never before been known ; as great leaders of the forces of England, both by land and sea, and who in the recent war, when all was at stake, had maintained the honour of the British flag against almost hopeless odds. The accused, whether guilty or innocent, was a man of no common powers ; the accusers, the most brilliant company of orators that had ever been seen together in one place and to advocate

one cause. Tickets for admission to the Hall were sold at almost fabulous prices, and without exaggeration it may be said that all England was present to witness the commencement of this great trial on the memorable thirteenth of February. Some people might go merely to see the show; some, to pity Hastings and, without knowing of what he was accused, to rail at his accusers; some, to listen to the most extraordinary displays of oratory from the greatest orators of England: all however went; the fascination was irresistible.

Several of those who were then present have left descriptions of what they beheld at the opening of the prosecution. There are still living in extreme old-age men who in their youths looked on the scene, and who in a somewhat vague manner will attempt to describe their impressions. An engraving of rare merit has also not only preserved to us the general appearance of Westminster Hall on that great occasion, but has even attempted to render, sometimes with no little accuracy, the figures and portraits of the most distinguished personages then present, and who have long since vanished from this earthly scene. Before it was filled with the rank and fashion of England, the Hall was one blaze of scarlet, except in the place prepared for the Commons, for whom their characteristic green benches were allotted. The Chancellor, when the impeachment began, sat enthroned in the centre under a rich state canopy, and near him were the Judges in their ermine and the other great legal officials. Thurlow seemed to frown more than usual, for he disapproved of the prosecution, and though, as first Judge of the land, some reserve might be expected from him, he had not scrupled to let his opinion be known. On the left, sat the Peers in their robes;

on the right, the Prelates of the Church, distinguished by their lawn sleeves. At the opposite extremity fronting the Chancellor's throne, rose the box of the Great Chamberlain; and below it the place destined for the state prisoner. At his left and also in the higher portions of the Hall, sat the Commons, elaborately dressed, with their bag-wigs, court suits, and swords, but looking in their fine attire, as a witty lady remarked at the time, more like hairdressers than gentlemen and Members of Parliament.\* Just opposite to them appeared the Peeresses and their daughters, in all their gorgeous dresses, and sparkling with those gold and diamond ornaments which on such occasions the beauty and fashion of England delight to display. The fascinating Duchess of Devonshire was there, surrounded by the great Whig ladies, who took a pleasure in braving the anger of the Court, and, proud of all the talents and accomplishments which adorned their party, looked superciliously on the duller Tory ladies, who recognized the Duchess of Rutland as their chieftainess, but, though supported by all royal and ministerial influence, could not, like the Opposition ladies, launch a satirical couplet, make an epigram, or carry a Westminster election. Notwithstanding the brilliancy of the scene, a damp mist filled the Hall, which rendered those who were at opposite extremities somewhat indistinguishable to each other, and had a depressing influence on those fashionable persons who, after, for once in their lives, rising early and hurrying over their breakfasts before eight o'clock in the morning, had remained in their seats from between nine and ten until nearly twelve, before the business of the day began.

A few minutes before noon an unusual stir announced that the long monotony was about to be broken. The

\* Madame D'Arblay's Diary, vol. iv. p. 59.



doors were thrown open, and in walked Burke at the head of the Committee of Managers. His appearance exhibited no joyful exultation, nor any indication of gratified animosity. The great object to which the labour of years had been directed was fulfilled; but no triumphant emotion, no pleasurable excitement, was depicted on that face and on that brow. They who knew him in the days of Lord Rockingham, and before the great contests of the Coalition, were surprised and pained to see the change that the last few years had wrought. His brow was knit, and the lines of the face deeply marked; and as he slowly and solemnly walked up to the Managers' box, holding a scroll in his hand, and with all eyes fixed upon him, he seemed oppressed with deep thought and saddened by secret care. The men who followed him, Fox, Sheridan, Grey, Anstruther, Montagu, Pelham, Burgoyne, and others, were his political associates and friends; many of them embarked in the work of the impeachment, simply because their party had become inextricably involved in it, and looked forward merely to the opportunity of making a great speech. Burke had however far different motives. That his whole heart was engaged in the business, that he considered he was performing one of the most sacred duties ever imposed on man, that he was convinced the welfare of the different races, and countless millions of India was staked on the success of the impeachment, and firmly believed Hastings to be a great criminal, harsh, rapacious, obdurate, without a scruple, without a principle, enriched with the hoards of extorted treasures and stained with the blood of innocent and helpless men, separated from these shores by wide seas, and still more separated by differences of race and creed, are facts which even they who have no

respect for Burke's memory, and especially disapprove of this trial, will find it vain to dispute. Hastings himself, who after all the great dignitaries had taken their seats was brought up to the bar, even when he fell on his knees and had to wait until the Court commanded him to rise, did not look sadder than his great accuser.

The crier made proclamation. The Lord Chancellor then addressed Hastings in a short but impressive speech, and in his fine sonorous voice, which reverberated throughout the Hall, and inspired awe in the minds of all beholders except Burke and the Managers of the impeachment, who, knowing the partiality of Thurlow for Hastings, were indignant at an expression which fell from him, intimating that the charges they had taken so much pains to get up, and on which the House of Commons had voted the impeachment, were as yet mere allegations, to be by them either proved or disproved. Perhaps no Lord Chancellor of England ever looked more dignified and respectable than Thurlow at that moment; perhaps no Lord Chancellor had at heart less sense of personal dignity or deserved less respect.

Many of the spectators supposed that, after these preliminary formalities had been gone through, Burke would at once proceed to accuse Hastings, and that they would have the immediate opportunity of hearing one of his great efforts of eloquence. They were not a little disappointed on finding that all the charges and the answers to them, which were of great length, were to be read, and that this tedious business would occupy all that day and probably the following one. The intense excitement which had prevailed at the entrance of Burke and the appearance of Hastings at the bar gradually subsided, as the officials proceeded with such an ungrateful

and wearisome task as the reading of elaborate documents must ever be to an assembly agitated by great emotions, and impatiently expecting to hear a great oration. People began to look round for their acquaintances and friends, to criticize each other, to joke and laugh, to take refreshments, and to discuss the probable issue of the cause which had at length begun. Sir Joshua Reynolds, with his beaming eyes, went into the Managers' box to Burke and his other friends ; but owing to some cause or other, he was without his ear-trumpet, and to every kind greeting could only bow and smile, being quite unable to converse.

Hastings, now quite calm, turned round and, taking a deliberate survey of his audience, gave many of the spectators the opportunity they had so long desired of seeing the face of the man who had done such great things, and was accused of such great crimes. He looked pale, pensive, severe ; but even those who disliked him most could not but admit, as he gazed steadily around him with that keen and piercing eye, and the calm but resolute glance, which the most formidable dangers had never disturbed, that he was no vulgar criminal, but whatever might be his faults, his errors, or his guilt, appeared to be the great and intrepid statesman, fertile in every resource, ready to surmount every obstacle, and to crush every enemy, that he undoubtedly was. Few of those who were even engaged in the work of the impeachment could refrain from looking with some degree of astonishment, if not with pity, at the vicissitude of fortune which he in his own person so strongly represented. For many years his will had been paramount over India. He had been the true king and ruler of that great Eastern peninsula. The dusky millions of Asiatics had trembled at

his power, and mentioned his name with awe. At his command armies had gone forth; at his command they had returned. At his feet sovereigns had humbly prostrated themselves to render the most submissive homage. According to his will treaties had been made or broken, kings raised or deposed. From Cape Comorin almost to the Himalayas, his influence had been found to extend. Without being himself a soldier, soldiers had been proud to serve him and implicitly obey him. Shipped off a mere youth, without friends, to India, and for a time engaged in the humble duties of a clerk in a counting-house, so irresistible had been his genius for command, that he had acquired power in the East such as no other Englishman had ever exercised; had, in the most terrible crisis of the British empire, preserved the British dominions in India; and by the population of the East, as well as by all Englishmen at home, had been regarded not only as the first, but as indisputably the greatest, of the Governor-Generals of India.

The generous and high-minded Windham came into the box where Miss Burney was sitting. Though she had been so enthusiastic in her admiration of Burke when she met him in the summer of 1782 at Richmond in the brief season of his prosperity, and though he had in the kindest manner conferred favours upon her father, since then the atmosphere of the Court into which she had perversely entered as a Maid of Honour, had much altered the sentiments of Dr. Burney's daughter. She still considered Burke to be a great and good man; but, though she knew nothing of the subject, persisted, with the rest of the courtiers, who of course spoke the sentiments of the King and Queen, in looking upon her illustrious friend as a cruel persecutor. She ventured, much

to Windham's surprise, to confess that she was prepossessed in favour of Hastings. "For Mr. Hastings prepossessed!" he answered, as Miss Burney confesses, in a tone which seemed to say, "Do you not mean Mr. Burke?" Yes, indeed; for Mr. Burke had been her friend, and her father's friend; but Mr. Burke was not liked at Court, and Miss Burney, the Maid of Honour, was a different person from Miss Burney, the author of *Evelina*, proud to be noticed by the great orator and statesman, and ready to hang with delight upon his words. She was even afraid to notice her old friends. When young Richard Burke climbed on a bench in the Managers' box to give her a kind "How do you do, Miss Burney?" she was vexed and alarmed; for the Queen was present privately, and Miss Burney seemed to believe that she was committing high-treason in suffering herself even to be spoken to by Edmund Burke's son.\* Burke's old friend, Dr. Markham, the Archbishop of York, was of course in the same predicament. His son had been protected and enriched by Hastings in India, as it was politic in him to protect and enrich the son of so good, faithful, and devoted a courtier; Dr. Markham had strongly taken up Hastings's cause, and though he affected gravely and impartially to read the charges, it was observed that his mind had long been made up. At such a time it was not to be expected that Major Scott could be absent. Dressed appropriately in green, the Major sat next the Speaker, and from this prominent position hopped about from one place to another, more pompously and officiously than ever, looking like, as Windham called him, a restless little grasshopper.† Each person had his own impression; each sought out his own friends; the little

\* Madame D'Arblay's *Diary*, vol. iv. p. 66.

† *Ibid.*, p. 74.

vanities and prejudices of private life intruded themselves into this great historical scene. Men are still men, even when the greatest affairs seem for the time to raise them above their ordinary humanity.

The second day of the trial passed very much like the first. But on the third day, the fifteenth of February, it was known that Burke would open the business of the prosecution, and the interest, if possible, increased. He rose to address an audience such as had, perhaps, never before or since listened to the spoken words of one man. Whether he succeeded or failed, he could not but admit that he had, without exception, been afforded the greatest opportunity ever given to a British orator. Friends and enemies were both there to criticize his words, and judge of the effect he might produce. The speech, too, had the advantage of not being confined to one specific charge, but was intended to give an introductory and general view of the whole subject; the orator could, therefore, expatiate without limit over that extensive field, and appeal at will to the imagination, passions, or reasoning powers of his hearers. He began by giving a short history of the circumstances which had induced the Commons to approach the bar of the Peers, alluded to the magnitude of the crimes and the position of the criminal, and earnestly called upon their Lordships not, in a cause of such importance, and of which most of the misdeeds had been perpetrated in a distant country, to confine the reception of evidence by the technical rules of ordinary courts of law. He then gave a history of the East Indian Company, from its origin in the reign of Queen Elizabeth down to the time when, from being a mere commercial corporation, it became the great governing body of Hindostan. The nature of its constitution,

the kind of persons sent out to administer its affairs, the regulations to which they were subjected, the temptations to which they were exposed, were vividly described, and a most lucid exposition given of the relations of the Company to their officials, and of the relation of the officials to their native black servants, or banyans, to whose evil influence he attributed much of the fraud, oppression, and tyranny which had so long harassed the miserable population of the East. He then entered into a description of the various races inhabiting Bengal, marking the era of the different invasions of the Arabs, Mahometans, and Tartars, that had successively poured down upon the plains. His description of the Gentoos, their origin, their antiquity, their legislation, and the institution of caste, was a noble piece of historical and oratorical composition, glowing with the richest tints of the imagination, and bathed in the subdued light of that humane philosophy with which he was accustomed to contemplate all races, institutions, and nations. The account of the different invaders before the establishment of the British dominions terminated the speech for that day. One loud hum of approbation broke forth as he sat down. Great as had been the expectation, it was acknowledged that it had been more than fulfilled. The House of Commons had long been familiar, and only too familiar, with his noble eloquence; and on this more conspicuous scene, on the greatest of occasions, there was but one opinion, that his powers had never shone forth more resplendently, and that, while there were orators around him of high and various excellence, in the highest rank of all, he was, as he had long been, unapproached and unapproachable.

On the next day, the sixteenth of February, he re-

sumed this great oration, beginning with the destruction of the Company's trading port at Calcutta and the terrible tragedy of the Black Hole, which by the genius of Clive were so sternly avenged, and which, in their direct consequences, unquestionably led to the establishment of our empire in India. His narrative of the intricate transactions of that more remote period of our dominion was of course, as he assured their Lordships at the outset, only illustrative, and not intended to criminate Hastings. The Indian statesman, being then indeed in a very subordinate post, could not justly be blamed for the misdeeds which flourished in the earlier periods of the British power, under Clive and Vansittart. It was necessary however that all their proceedings should be thoroughly understood by those who were to sit in judgment on the prisoner. The most effective part of the day's speech was when, diverging from the details of mere Indian affairs, Burke proceeded to examine the principles on which Hastings attempted to justify his conduct, and especially to condemn the notions that arbitrary power existed in India, that the English Legislature could confer arbitrary power, or that such a thing as irresponsible arbitrary power could ever be exercised at all. This dissertation was like his sketch of the Gentoos and their religion, instinct with the finest political philosophy, and is imbued with all that toleration for different races and creeds, hatred of injustice, and sincere love of real freedom which, whatever may be the misconceptions prevailing in some quarters, rendered Burke the most comprehensively liberal of English statesmen. He illustrated the noble sentiments to which he then gave utterance by reading from the Institutes of Tamerlane, showing that even a



barbarous conqueror, the founder of that Mogul empire which was superseded by what ought to have been the moral, milder, and more temperate dominion of England, acknowledged himself accountable as a ruler to a higher Power, and considered it his duty to conform to the laws and regulations which had been promulgated by the wisest and best men in all times. That there was not anywhere what he happily called, on the mere spur of the moment, a geographical morality, a morality depending on time and place rather than on the eternal rules of right and wrong, such as with very trifling modifications have existed in all countries and in all eras, he abundantly demonstrated, at once refuting the rash dogmas of sceptics and sciolists, who would endeavour to confound all the principles of morals, and set up at once, in inseparable companionship, as they must of necessity be, atheism in religion and despotism in politics. All the enlightened and philanthropic doctrines which our wisest politicians have endeavoured to apply to the administration of our Indian empire, and to promote the welfare of the Indian people, will be found in this elaborate speech. The interest excited by the trial, and especially by the masterly display of oratory which the leading prosecutor was making, had increased to the utmost. It was considered most extraordinary that on this day there were no less than one hundred and seventy-five peers present; and as the number of peers was then unusually limited, through the disinclination which up to very recently George III. had evinced to make any addition to their number, the supercilious men of fashion and gouty invalids who on this occasion made up the coronetted portion of Burke's audience, must certainly have been remarkable, and is indeed one

of the most striking facts connected with the history of the impeachment.

The fifth day of the impeachment, the third on which Burke addressed the Lords, was perhaps, in a rhetorical sense, the most important of all. It was then that he recounted the cruelties of Debi Sing and his worthy associates over the defenceless Hindoo population, and by his pathos and energy produced an effect which may be considered unsurpassed in all the records of oratory. It proves beyond a doubt, as I have before maintained, that Burke on some occasions had as great a power over his audience as any of those men who, intellectually his inferiors, were considered far superior to him in merely exciting the passions and keeping up the attention of their hearers. Holding the documents in his hand as authorities which could not be questioned, with streaming eyes, and every muscle of his face strung as he was powerfully worked upon by his own description, when he related how the lighted torches and slow fires were made to inflict tortures on the most tender and delicate persons of the women, and death implanted in the very source of life, his audience, whose feelings had been gradually wrought up to this climax, could not restrain themselves. The whole assembly was deeply affected. Mrs. Siddons confessed that all the illusions of the stage sank into insignificance before the scene she then beheld; and the great actress did homage to the great orator. Mrs. Sheridan fainted. Even the stern Lord Chancellor Thurlow, who sat the dogged image of cynical impassibility, and who was deeply prejudiced both against Burke and the cause he advocated, could not keep up his sullen hostility, and for the first time in his life a tear was observed to be in his eye. But

the most wonderful effect was produced on Hastings himself. His heart was no tender one. He hated Burke, and had despised him, until he had by stern experience been compelled to fear him. He tried to buoy himself up with the consciousness of innocence, and at least with the purity of his motives. But as he listened to the harrowing recital of crimes, which if he had not authorized, he had most certainly not censured, and for which he had taken no steps to call their perpetrators to account, even his callous heart seemed to feel the pangs of sorrow and remorse, and for the moment he thought himself the most wicked of mankind. The orator at length was overcome by his own feelings; his tongue seemed to be paralyzed by his emotion, while scorn and horror were still depicted upon his brow, and the lightning of indignation flashed from his eye. On recovering himself, he proceeded with his narrative; but his strength was exhausted. After seeking the refreshment of a glass of water, he was seized with pains in the stomach, which again brought him to a pause; his frame was strongly agitated, but after a few moments' rest, being anxious to conclude this opening address on that afternoon, he again attempted to speak. He had scarcely done more than deliver a few apologetic sentences when he was again taken ill, and the Prince of Wales moved the adjournment of the House. On the following day Burke brought this great introductory effort to its conclusion. The peroration, in which he surveyed the different constituent portions of the great tribunal before which the prisoner was charged; the delegated authority of the crown; the heir apparent; the different branches of the royal family; the great hereditary peerage, who had their own honour and the honour of their ancestors and

posterity to guard ; the new nobility, who had risen by great military and great civil talents ; the judges, who had long been engaged in administering high though subordinate justice ; and the bishops, who represented that religion whose vital spirit was charity, and which so much hated all oppression. that when the divine Author appeared in human form, it was as one of the humblest of the people, thus establishing, as the orator finely said, that their welfare was the great object of all government, was of the highest excellence. And the effect was appalling, as he at last raised his powerful voice until the lofty arches reverberated, and solemnly impeached Hastings, in the name of the Commons in Parliament, whose trust he had betrayed ; in the name of the Commons of Great Britain, whose national character he had dishonoured ; in the name of the people of India, whose laws, rights, and liberties he had subverted, whose property he had destroyed, whose country he had laid waste and desolate ; in the name of the eternal laws of justice, which he had violated ; in the name of human nature itself, which in both sexes, in every age, rank, situation, condition of life, he had cruelly outraged and oppressed. " This peroration," said Windham, " was the noblest ever uttered by man." As Burke sat down, the deep murmur of suppressed emotion made itself audible. All talked about the speech. Fox, himself so celebrated an orator, rose to state to their Lordships the method of proceeding, but even he was scarcely attended to ; and very shortly afterwards the great assembly separated.

Windham might be a partial judge. But who ever deliberately surveys this great opening harangue of Burke, extending over four days, must acknowledge that, for

masterly comprehension of a great subject, and the power of conveying by oral eloquence its author's own luminous impressions on others in the most energetic and copious language, with the most finished rhetorical skill and the deepest philosophical insight, this speech is unrivalled in British eloquence, and in all eloquence. It increases our admiration of it to know that, though of course carefully prepared, it was not written down beforehand, but only afterwards preserved by the reporters' notes, and corrected by Burke himself. It never received the finishing touches from his hand. But the report, as it was taken down at the time, may now, through the liberality of the Government, be compared with the corrected copy Burke himself left, and it will appear that, while his manuscript is superior in condensation, the rough shorthand report does him equal justice as an orator, and indeed, perhaps, shows occasionally in a greater degree some of the more brilliant offshoots of his genius. Many of the most original and striking sallies were the sudden inspirations of the moment, while his mind was in full glow, and the burning words fell in rich profusion from his tongue.

His success had amply justified the confidence of his friends and admirers. Day after day as he proceeded, although his matter was not intended directly to criminate, the case against Hastings became stronger and stronger; and when Burke concluded, the whole world, as was remarked at the time, seemed against the oppressor of India. The supporters of Hastings no longer spoke confidently of an acquittal; and though they were still loud in their protests in favour of his innocence, they did not deny that Burke had made a most damaging attack, and that Hastings already reeled under the master's blow.

They were, however, very speedily reassured. It was the desire of the Managers for the impeachment to take the evidence and hear the defence of each charge separately ; but this method of proceeding was strongly opposed by Law, afterwards Chief Justice of the King's Bench, and who, as Hastings's leading counsel, exhibited all those vigorous talents and that coarseness of mind which he afterwards so prominently displayed on the judicial bench as Lord Ellenborough, and as a peer of the realm. Burke and he, as prosecutor and defender of Hastings, were naturally thrown into a position of strong antagonism. The bold and unscrupulous lawyer had little sympathy with the philosophic and far-seeing orator. Both, too, were men of no gentle tempers ; and the scenes that occasionally occurred between them were neither very pleasing nor very edifying. Fox endeavoured to show from all English history that the course he advocated was supported by numerous precedents. The Lords however thought differently. Thurlow treated with the utmost contempt Lord Loughborough's assertion that the law and usage of Parliament emancipated an impeachment from the ordinary rules of courts of law, and in fact boldly denied that such a law had any existence at all. He maintained that the same rules of evidence and the same legal forms which prevailed in the lower courts would be acted upon by the House of Lords ; and on a division he was sustained by eighty-eight peers, while the principle which the Managers of the impeachment asserted, only found thirty-three supporters.

At the outset, therefore, the impeachment had received a check that at least showed on which side the majority inclined. The Managers were in a rage ; but rage

availed them little. They had to bring forward their whole case before the defence began ; and they were bringing forward a cause for trial before a tribunal by whom it had already been prejudged. The resolution that the majority had evidently formed to confine the evidence to the narrow bounds prescribed by an English court of law at once destroyed any chance that the Managers might have formed of ultimate success. The quirks and quibbles of the lawyers, as was acutely observed at the time, would be more than a match for all the logic and rhetoric of the most brilliant orators. Still Burke and his friends persevered, and if eloquence could have convicted Hastings, he would indeed have been placed in a hopeless situation. Fox opened the charge about the treatment of Cheyt Sing, as he had previously brought it forward in the Commons ; and he delivered a speech of several hours' length with masterly effect. He was supported by the youngest of the Managers, Charles Grey, who from his youth, his abilities, and his character, kindled the greatest interest. The ladies flocked to hear him. Everybody was gratified with him. The second article, respecting the Begum Princes of Oude, was brought forward by two less distinguished orators, Mr. Adam and Mr. Pelham ; but Sheridan replied on this portion of the evidence, and, as in the House of Commons so in the Lords on the same subject, the sparkling declamation, as highly finished as one of his pointed dialogues for the stage, was the object of universal admiration. So anxious was Burke that Sheridan should acquit himself well on so great an occasion, that he wrote privately to Mrs. Sheridan, anxiously telling her to look after her lord, and see that he made himself master of the subject ; and after the brilliant wit and dramatist concluded

his speech, which also extended over four days, Burke received him in his arms, and hugged him with generous and affectionate delight. Which of the two men was really jealous of the other?

The summer was now at hand, and the London season drawing to its close. For some months, however, they who both openly and secretly were hostile to the impeachment had raised a great outcry about the expense with which it was attended. They reported that the Managers had paid most exorbitant fees to the counsel for the prosecution; that sumptuous entertainments were prepared for them; and that under the direction of Burke enormous sums had been most prodigally squandered in every direction. The Treasury very early requested an account from the Managers; and Burke replied to Pitt's request in a letter which was considered not the most explicit and complimentary. The subject was then, under the Ministers' instigation, brought before the House of Commons. Both Fox and Burke strongly argued, that while the Managers were really responsible for the directions they gave about the necessary services to be done, they had nothing whatever to do with the control of the money advanced; it was not their business, but that of the Treasury itself, to see that the charges made upon the public purse were really proper and reasonable. Explicit accounts were laid upon the table, but the subject was in one form or another over and over again revived. In these discussions, as indeed in most of the debates at this period, very warm language passed between Pitt and Burke. Without Pitt's concurrence there could have been no impeachment; yet neither did he take upon himself the duty of one of the Managers, but he studiously avoided appear-



ing in Westminster Hall while the trial was proceeding and the great series of orations was being delivered. Annoyed, however, at some of the observations Burke made about the expenses, he turned round, and, while he praised the propriety and decency of Fox, accused Burke of introducing into the debates of the House of Commons the same strong language he was accustomed to use in Westminster Hall. Burke replied that, although he did not wish to speak harshly of the Minister, it was a little strange that his words and his actions should be at such variance with each other; that he should assent to the prosecution, and, as soon as it was begun, refrain from giving it his countenance, and even support a motion of which the object was evidently to render it utterly ineffectual.\*

There was much truth in these remarks. Pitt had not been neutral when the question of the impeachment was before the House of Commons. It was scarcely fair in him to affect neutrality as soon as it was brought before the House of Lords. The impeachment was his own work. His influence had turned the scale against the accused, and sent him to the bar of the House of Lords. But Pitt seemed tacitly to confess that his intention was not to convict Hastings, but prevent him from becoming a rival in his own Cabinet. This now could not be. Whether ultimately acquitted or convicted, the adverse vote of the House of Commons could not easily be got over; and every day on which the Lords sat in Westminster Hall showed more clearly that the trial would be of a length unprecedented in the English annals.

Though the accounts of the expenses had been laid

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iii. p. 322-26.

before the House, the enemies of the impeachment were not satisfied. One honourable Member, after perusing the documents, both of the general and particular expenditure, was still troubled with many doubts. He doubted whether the Managers were authorized to employ counsel; he doubted whether there was any precedent for employing counsel; and he doubted whether there were any peculiar circumstances of difficulty in the impeachment that made the assistance of counsel necessary. He moved a resolution that on the first day of every month, the solicitors for the prosecution should place a detailed account of the expenditure before the House. This resolution, and the speech by which it was introduced, was made on the sixth of June, on the second evening of Sheridan's splendid performance in Westminster Hall. Immediately after the honourable Member had sat down, Burke rose. He would, he said, neither second nor oppose the motion. Was this glorious day, after the triumph of the morning, a fitting time to bring forward such a business? Every Member had been struck dumb with astonishment and admiration at the wonderful eloquence of his friend, who had surprised the thousands that hung with rapture upon his words, by a display of talents unparalleled in the annals of oratory; and between their adjournment from Westminster Hall and the rising of the House, they were called to an examination of the items of a solicitor's bill of costs! It proved that Providence intended man not to be proud; that human infirmity and littleness should ever accompany true glory. This was a day to dignify the nation, to dignify human nature. Nothing that the acuteness of the bar, the dignity of the senate, or the morality of the pulpit could furnish, equalled what the House had heard that day in

Westminster Hall. Instead of going into a committee of petty accounts, they ought, like the Romans after Scipio's victories, to thank the gods for that day's triumph.\*

Such a panegyric as Burke then delivered was doubtless deserved. As the eulogium of one orator by another, and especially by him who was the leading prosecutor, and himself the most distinguished speaker in Westminster Hall, this was most remarkable; the man who was loudest in the praise of Sheridan's speech was Burke, whom Sheridan's biographer, adopting the reports of Holland House, and never writing a sentence or making a simile without previously considering whether it would be admired in that select aristocratic circle, has not hesitated to accuse of the meanest jealousy, for the purpose of elevating Sheridan, who in some respect certainly needed elevation.† With so many brilliant intellectual accomplishments, there were few distinguished men of the last century to whom so many littlenesses have been conclusively brought home as to Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Burke's interposition on the evening of his countryman's greatest triumph was successful. The orthodox and respectable Sir William Dolben ventured to second the motion, though he said he had not recovered from the whiff and wind of Burke's fell arm; but most of the members seemed really ashamed that the question of expense should be so frequently revived, evidently as a mere means of annoyance, and the order of the day was put and carried without any difficulty.

During this momentous session, which might be con-

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxvii. p. 544.

† Moore's Life of Sheridan.

sidered the busiest period of Burke's busy life, although his time and labours were so constantly employed in Westminster Hall, he attended almost with his ordinary regularity the evening debates in the Commons, and frequently spoke with all his usual energy and zeal. A bill which Pitt brought in to extend the powers of the Board of Control over the East Indian Company was the object of the recent attacks of the Opposition. They were now the defenders of the Company, the Minister the assailant; and it was evident, as Fox and Burke triumphantly showed, that the novel machinery of the Board of Control was intended to be quite as absolute over the East as the Commissioners in the celebrated Indian Bill, on which the Coalition Government had suffered such a disastrous shipwreck. Pitt found himself pressed hard; the number of his supporters diminished; and he was obliged to recommit his Bill, and introduce restraining clauses in a manner which was sufficiently humiliating to his haughty spirit. Burke's allusion to the demeanour of the Minister in such trying circumstances was considered most happily characteristic; the portrait was admitted, by those who knew the subject, to be the living image of the original. "I congratulate the House," said Burke, "that confidence is at last exploded. The Minister has himself avowed a distrust of his colleagues, and demanded suspicion from us. Well may the learned gentleman who presides over the destinies of the East be clothed in sackcloth and ashes. I entreat it may be remembered that the caution comes not from this side of the House, but from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, he who forty-eight hours ago recommended, nay, bullied us into confidence. But even when engaged in so melancholy an act he performs it

with an air of pride ; he scatters his ashes abroad with dignity, and wears his sackcloth as if it were a robe of purple.\*

The proposed impeachment of Sir Elijah Impey, the late Chief Justice in Bengal, was also warmly supported by Burke, though it might have seemed that he then had quite enough to do with impeachments, without adding to their number. Pitt and Burke were on this question, as on so many others, violently opposed, and it must be confessed that the young Minister treated him not only with little respect, but in a manner highly unbecoming one who was so much the inferior in years, in attainments, and in genius. The question of Sir Elijah's prosecution before the Lords, which had hung over several sessions, was finally closed before the prorogation. That he richly deserved impeachment, few will be inclined to deny ; even many who warmly supported Hastings in the House of Commons had strong scruples against defending Impey. They who voted for the impeachment of Hastings could not without much contradiction refuse to impeach Impey ; for Impey was a judge sent out to protect the natives from oppression and to redress their grievances, and yet he had not hesitated to give the sanction of his ermine to the worst of those deeds for which Hastings had been put upon his trial. To vote both for the acquittal of Impey and for the impeachment of Hastings seemed in the highest degree illogical and inconsistent. It was however the course which Pitt took. He was severely reprehended by Burke, and on this ground they had one of the most severe of their many encounters. "It was said," observed Burke, "that if the gods of old addressed themselves to men,

\* See Wraxall's Posthumous Memoirs, vol. iii. p. 41.

they would use the language of the Greeks. With equal truth may I declare, that if despotism itself were to speak, it would use the language and enforce the arguments of the Chancellor of the Exchequer." In a subsequent discussion, when Impey was allowed to escape from proceedings which he certainly merited, Pitt retorted upon Burke in language the most bitterly personal and severe. Burke's reply was memorable. "I have suffered," said he, "many harsh observations from the right honourable gentleman's predecessors on that bench, but I have suffered more from his foul and offensive breath, than from the aspersions of every Minister who has gone before him." This was true. Lord North, in the fiercest period of the American war, when invectives of the keenest nature were nightly thundered against him by Burke, never replied with such insulting acrimony as Pitt habitually displayed. On this occasion the Minister appeared to feel a little compunction, and though never anxious to apologize for words uttered in the course of debate, he rose afterwards and made use of one or two expressions which were understood to be somewhat conciliatory. "The right honourable gentleman," remarked Pitt, "appears to have forgotten all the harsh things said about him by former Ministers."\*

While the struggles and the dissensions of the past were recalled to him, he was engaged at the close of the session in an agreeable if melancholy duty, which could not but make him reflect the more deeply on that past, and compare it with the anxious and less hopeful present.

\* There is a discrepancy between the version given by Wraxall, and that in the Parliamentary Reports. I incline to the account which is most creditable to Pitt. Wraxall's *Posthumous Memoirs*, vol. iii. p. 99.

He was engaged in writing the epitaph for a monument to Lord Rockingham, which that nobleman's nephew and heir, Lord Fitzwilliam, had erected in Wentworth Park. Busts of those politicians who had shared the Marquis's labours and been the principal ornaments of his party, were to be placed in juxtaposition with that of their chief. Seldom has a statesman deserved such a monument; seldom has the erection of such a work been performed in a more satisfactory manner. Niches for Burke and Saville and Dowdeswell were there, and for other distinguished men, some of whom had passed away; and others, such as Charles James Fox, were still in the full vigour of their faculties and in the maturity of their fame. Burke's epitaph was a composition of great merit: it is distinguished by eloquence, affection, and philosophy. Lord Rockingham's character is most faithfully drawn; and it appears also to have been at the same time the writer's object to show the contrast between the virtuous, amiable, and high-minded nobleman, and his rival and enemy, the brilliant and patriotic but impracticable and overweening Earl of Chatham. Such at least appears to be the double meaning of the following sentences: "By his prudence and patience he brought together a party which it was the great object of his labours to render permanent, not as an instrument of ambition, but as a living depository of principle. The virtues of his public and private life were not in him of different characters. It was the same feeling, benevolent, liberal mind, that in the internal relations of life conciliates the unfeigned love of those who see men as they are, which made him an inflexible patriot. He was devoted to the cause of liberty, not because he was haughty

and impracticable, but because he was beneficent and humane."

After the excitement and struggle of the laborious session, a few quiet hours at Beaconsfield spent in musing on the great and good qualities of that generous and noble friend, whose death had had so disastrous an influence on the fortunes of the Whig party, and on Burke himself, must have been inexpressibly soothing. The last week of June found him once more quietly settled down in the country, busy with his farming, and entering with great zest into all the details of English rural life. None who had seen him strolling over his fields in the morning, accompanied by one of his humble dependants, estimating the possible produce of the harvest, or sitting down after dinner discoursing on the weather, and the depredations of the fox on the chickens and turkeys, could easily have believed, without previous knowledge, that this was the great orator, who had during the last few months made the rafters of Westminster Hall echo with his eloquent denunciations of tyranny and oppression, and whose mind was occupied with more comprehensive and prescient views of government and society than that of any other statesman then existing in the world. But even the country, with all its calmness and beauty, with the corn just filling the ear, and the hay-fields fragrant with their produce, has also its troubles of one kind or another. In the country, though there may be no great oppressors like Warren Hastings, there are many little tyrants; and Beaconsfield had its diminutive despot. At Beaconsfield too, though there was no unscrupulous Chief Justice, like Sir Elijah Impey, ready to second the master in his iniquities, there were small attorneys eager to carry on what Burke called the petty war of



village vexation. The lord of the manor, Mr. Waller, of Hall Barn, made himself obnoxious to most of his neighbours. He had commenced a lawsuit about the right to a certain pond at Burke's door; it was this summer tried at Aylesbury, and decided in the statesman's favour.

At this time the two Richard Burkes, uncle and nephew, were down at Bristol. The world had during these years on the whole gone prosperously with them both. Richard the elder, though he had not become Lord Chancellor, had in 1783 been chosen Recorder of Bristol. This was an office of some emolument and some dignity. It exactly suited the jovial and facetious Dick. He was on terms of intimacy with all his brother's old friends, and the connection between the family and the city of Bristol was kept up long after Edmund had ceased to represent the constituency of which he was once so proud.

Young Richard Burke, the hope of all the circle at Beaconsfield, had also some time previously been called to the bar. He had taken chambers at No. 4, Stone Buildings, Lincoln's Inn, and set about seriously practising his profession. As yet he had had no opportunity of displaying the talents he possessed; but Burke had no reason on that account to be disappointed, as it is not generally in the first years of a young barrister's career that he is afforded that opportunity. Richard was unusually diffident; he was most anxious to do great things; his father and his uncle were both convinced that he could do great things; and they buoyed him up with hopes which in their extreme perhaps prevented their own fulfilment. His first appearance in public as a speaker he himself considered a failure, and he was very much depressed in

consequence. Burke however saw no failure. He was sanguine that Richard would outstrip him both as an orator and statesman; and that in his case, as in those of Fox and Pitt, the son would be the equal to the father. The people with whom young Richard Burke came most into contact did not share in these parental illusions. He was generally considered as an amiable and virtuous young man, highly educated and accomplished, and with abilities of considerable excellence; but of a great original genius, such as his father was, none could see the evidence in the son. But had he possessed ever such rare powers, they must in a certain degree have been useless to their owner; his nervous susceptibility, the result of his very delicate constitution, was excessive; and it was found that whatever might be the preparations he made for the performance of a public duty, the result seldom answered either his expectations or those of the family, who regarded him with a kind of adoration, which Providence does not always permit to go unchastised and unbuked, when bestowed on any of the children of men.

The relationship between Richard the uncle and Richard the nephew was of the most affectionate kind: their dispositions were not indeed similar, but the very contrast may have cemented their mutual regard. Dick being a bachelor, and, so far as can be known, never having had the slightest intention of changing his free-and-easy condition, looked upon young Richard as his own son, and was not behind the father himself in love and tenderness for the heir and representative of their name. It was his delight to take his nephew on journeys with him, and their intercourse was the most frank and unrestrained. The gay and rattling uncle, whose jokes and love of fun, the result of his strong

animal spirits, have been immortalized by Goldsmith in *Retaliation*, took kindly to the grave and earnest nephew, who had no animal spirits at all, whose singularly beautiful though pensive and mournful countenance was seldom lit up with a smile, and who was never known to perpetrate a joke in all his life. The difference of years produced no disparity in their companionship; they appeared two friends devotedly attached to each other, and if there was any distinction between them, the manner of Richard the elder made him appear more juvenile than Richard the younger.

This summer, when Burke was relaxing at Beaconsfield, the uncle went down to Bristol to attend to the duties of his Recordership. He was accompanied by his nephew. To them Edmund wrote, pleasantly describing the little incidents of his rural existence, which appears to contrast so remarkably with his political life of the six previous months. The lawsuit with the obnoxious Mr. Waller was expected to come on the next day, and one of the characters in the neighbourhood, a strange fellow in humble circumstances, had called and vowed eternal vengeance against the vexatious lord of the manor. Hastings, and the friends of Hastings, who considered Burke the personification of all that was malevolent, violent, and revengeful, would have been surprised to read such a correspondence as he was then carrying on with his brother and son. "C.," wrote Burke, "called here this morning: he has made a very desperate threat, and declares that Mr. Waller has behaved so ill to him that he intends to become a gentleman. I hope he will think better of it before he executes this rash resolution. He talks of providing arms and paying the game duty. In the first paroxysm

of his passion he vowed he would not leave a hare in Mr. Waller's park. His land (he explained himself) comes up so near to that part of the latter, and is so intermixed with it, that if he could kill anything he shoots at (which he says he cannot), and if he could pay the game duty (of which he is not yet certain), he would cut off every soul of all the hares in the country. But this, he said, was only what he declared in his wrath. What will please you better was what he said rather more deliberately, that is, that he has a farm not far from hence, which he conceives to possess manorial rights, and that he means to take the opinion of one of you upon his title, and lay his deeds before you ; and that if you give him any heart upon the subject, he will depute a gamekeeper ; and then, lo you ! he executes all his threats by deputy, and by deputy becomes a lepocide and a gentleman. Adieu ! enjoy the first act of the ' Bourgeois Gentilhomme,' and the first book of the heroic war of C. against Waller. I shall be one of the allies, and Mrs. C., like another Juno, was very busy in stirring up the war. God Almighty bless you, and send you to us safe and sound ; and then let the dog worry the hog, or the hog the dog, whilst your heads are safe, I say, with as much truth to you as the grand vizier Caprili did to the French minister, with politeness."\*

Several distinguished visitors came to Beaconsfield during this quiet season. They all were delighted with Burke and his abode. His conversation when at home was still as easy, natural, and agreeable as it had been in earlier and perhaps happier days. When in town, and amid the bustle of politics, it could not be said of

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 78.

him, as Dr. Johnson said in the old times of the Club, that Burke was always the same: never morose, depressed, or sullen, but always equable, cheerful, and pleasant. The good and strict Hannah More, herself sufficiently inclined to seriousness, confessed that through business and politics Burke's health and spirits had become visibly impaired. In the country, without all the worrying anxieties of London life, he was his old self again, forgetting amid the woods and fields political defeats, disagreements with friends, and the pressure of poverty.

This summer his circumstances were far from easy. His friends were aware that he was embarrassed; and those who knew him best deeply regretted that, at his time of life, with a reputation so great after a life of so much industry, at the very climax of his renown, just after his splendid efforts in Westminster Hall, he should feel all the vexations and troubles of pecuniary difficulties. This was however really so. It proved, according to his own recent illustration, that, as in the Roman triumph, some degree of humiliation was an indispensable ingredient in the composition of all real glory.

One day, when summoned to town on business, he called on his old school friend, Dr. Brocklesby. After a useful and laborious life spent in the practice of his noble profession, which, when pursued in the spirit that he and a few men like him in all times have followed it, has indeed, like the office of the priest itself, something of a truly sacred character, this amiable physician had acquired the respect of all who knew him, and found himself blessed with a sufficient competence not only for his own wants, which were not extravagant, but also to

enable him to do many deeds of kindness which, though not chronicled in any human register, are never without their reward. The doctor, knowing to what Burke was subject, at once offered him a thousand pounds, which he assured him he had years ago bequeathed to him in his will. Burke at the time refused this generous boon. The next morning, however, when Burke had gone again down to Beaconsfield, Dr. Brocklesby renewed his offer in writing, and in the most earnest and handsome manner pressed Burke to accept it. No violent partisan the doctor was yet an unostentatious but true Whig. He remembered the days when Burke and he had sat on the same benches, and studied their lessons under Abraham Shackleton at Ballitore. He had watched his illustrious friend's public career, and fully appreciated the disinterested sacrifices he had made for principles which coming generations were to recognize and applaud, but which in his own time were misunderstood, trifled with, and condemned. He venerated the statesman; he loved the private friend. He honoured the honourable poverty of that statesman and that friend. "I have lived," he wrote, "a long life unnoticed professionally by any party of men; and though unknown at Court, I am rich enough to spare to virtue (what others waste in vice) this sum, and still reserve an annual income greater than I can spend. I shall receive at the India House a bill I have discounted for one thousand pounds, on the fourth of next month, and then shall be happy if you will accept this proof of my sincere love and esteem, and let me add,—'Si res ampla domi similisque affectibus esset.' I should be happy to repeat the like every year, until I saw your merit rewarded as it ought to be at Court." Burke, though the

Doctor wished him only to return a verbal answer, sent a letter in reply, accepting this living legacy. At the same time however he enclosed an acknowledgment of the money as a debt, leaving the option of destroying it or preserving it to his friend. "I shall never," said he, "be ashamed of having it known that I am obliged to one who never can be capable of converting his kindness into a burthen."\*

The Doctor and Burke remained to the last steadily attached to each other. Pecuniary obligations neither diminished nor increased their friendship; and this transaction, which deserves to be fully recorded as honourable to both, stands out in biography as something remarkable and exceptionable. And yet if friendship be anything but a name, why should it be so? As our poor human nature is constituted, such pecuniary obligations generally weaken and frequently dissolve more friendships than all other causes in the world. Few friendships stand this test; those that do may on both sides be pronounced sterling. In this class was the friendship of Brocklesby and Burke.

The good wishes which the Doctor expressed for his friend's prosperity seemed unexpectedly this autumn on the point of being realized. At the close of the session the political prospects of the Whigs were indeed all but hopeless. Pitt might occasionally make a mistake, but it was very speedily retrieved. On great questions his majority stood firm; and in moments of danger his supporters rallied round the young Prime Minister, who had won and deserved their confidence, and whom they were proud to follow. Expecting nothing but a recurrence of the same round of failures which the Whigs had

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. pp. 78-81.

been fated to endure ever since the time of the unfortunate Coalition, Charles Fox had gone on a Continental tour, and was in Italy when an event occurred which appalled the Ministerialists, and according to every reasonable political calculation placed the Opposition once more on the threshold of power. During Fox's absence, Burke, much against his own wish, found himself summoned to play a most responsible part in this strange and exciting crisis, which for the time made the trial of Hastings almost forgotten.



## CHAPTER XXXVII.

1788-1789.

## NEGLECT AND VEXATION.

As the autumn proceeded, rumours of the King's indisposition began to be spread abroad. George the Third, however, held a levee in the ordinary manner on the twenty-fourth of October. Some peculiar eccentricities in his dress and deportment attracted attention, and became the subject of general remark. In November the malady with which he was afflicted could not be concealed; and as Parliament had only been prorogued until the twentieth, the Houses met on that day, though without the usual summons for attendance on business which on ordinary occasions is generally issued. As soon as the Commons assembled, Pitt stated that the omission of the customary formality was owing to the King's illness, and moved the adjournment of the House for a fortnight. A similar motion was made in the House of Lords. The Opposition, in some measure disconcerted by the want of Charles Fox, gladly consented to the Ministerial proposal.

A few days later, Fox, after a rapid journey in a post-chaise through France, arrived in St. James's-street. He was, of course, eagerly welcomed by his friends and supporters, who hailed him as the future Minister; but his appearance was not that of one fitted for undertaking

the arduous duties of Government. The haste he had been obliged to make home over bad roads and in indifferent vehicles had seriously injured his health. His person looked emaciated; his complexion was sallow; his stockings hung about his legs. He seemed more fitted for a sick room than for Downing-street.\*

When he arrived, Burke was at Beaconsfield. He made no haste to hurry into town, but wrote to Fox that, when he wanted him, he might send for him, and that between them all ceremony had for some years been disregarded. The tone of the letter is remarkably frank and cordial. He did not wish, he said, to intrude his advice, as Fox had doubtless already too many advisers, and he had no doubt that his friend and leader would act for the best. Burke contented himself with intimating that the Ministers ought not to be permitted to take the lead in the settlement; that as things were out of their ordinary course, and they were now in an interregnum, the official people could no longer be considered the King's Ministers, and that the Prince ought to put himself forward, and by a message to the two Houses desire their counsel and support in so unexpected an emergency. In conclusion, Burke wrote: "Your business formerly was only to take care of your own honour. I hope you have now another trust. It is a great deal that the proscription is taken off; but at the same time the effects of twenty-eight years of systematic endeavours to destroy you cannot be done away with ease. You are to act a great and, though not a discouraging, a difficult part, and in a scene which is wholly new."†

The Houses again met on the fourth of December.

\* Wrexall's Post. Mem., vol. iii. p. 194.

† Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 85.

On that and some following days little but mere formalities were proceeded with, and there was scarcely any ostensible difference of opinion except a strong protest made by Burke against the doctrine enunciated by Pitt, that the examination of witnesses at the bar was useless, because the House had not the power to administer oaths. A Committee of twenty-one Members was appointed to examine the physicians; but while Lord North, Fox, and Sheridan were placed upon it, at the nomination of the Minister, Burke was excluded. On the tenth the Report was presented, and then the animosity between the possessors of power, and those who confidently expected to be their immediate successors, was publicly demonstrated. Pitt moved for another Committee to report precedents of proceedings when the personal exercise of the Royal power had been interrupted by sickness or infirmity. Fox rose, and maintained that such a Committee to report, not on Parliamentary precedents, but on the history of England, was useless. There was an heir-apparent to the Crown, of full age and capacity, who had an express right in such circumstances to exercise the Royal power, as if the Crown had undergone a natural and complete demise. This bold assertion was immediately seized upon by the Minister. He saw at once the advantage he would gain by combating a principle which, in truth, seemed to deny the constitutional authority of Parliament, and which consequently placed Pitt on the high ground of being the champion of Parliament in a Parliamentary assembly. Burke supported Fox, and the Opposition were irretrievably committed to a claim of prerogative, that, whatever might be the reservations with which it was made, certainly came strangely from the Whigs, who

boasted of the glorious Revolution of 1688, and had steadily stood up for the authority of Parliament as a control on the Government and the Crown. The Minister's position, and that of the Tories who supported him, was in its extreme equally extraordinary and unwarrantable. To pass by a Prince of Wales of mature age, or to restrain his power as Regent in any manner that a Parliamentary majority might please to dictate in the interest of their own political leaders, seems quite at variance with the principle of a hereditary monarchy under any limitations. There was no wisdom in these extremes. To define in every conceivable circumstance the conflicting claims of prerogative and the Lords and Commons is impossible; and the truth lies not in any abstract dogma, but in a just compromise between the two unqualified assertions. It may be said with little hesitation that Fox, in Pitt's position as the Minister endeavouring to maintain himself in office, and Pitt in Fox's position as the political leader expecting to enter office, would never have brought forward views that were clearly not the just deductions from any sound political principles, but the result of their opposite political necessities.

Pitt's policy was, in one respect at least, far superior to that of the Opposition. He maintained his popularity. Fox and Burke were again, as in 1783, advocating principles which, even though they had been unquestionably correct, did not recommend them to public confidence. The opinion of the most clear-sighted and impartial observers was, that Pitt played his game with much skill, coolness, and dexterity; while the leaders of the Opposition damaged themselves and their cause by a series of rash and intemperate blunders, which it seemed almost

incredible that such experienced statesmen could ever commit.

It is much to be regretted that, while there were so many errors committed by the Prince's advisers, Burke, carried away by the excitement of his temper, which, with all the anxiety and labour of the impeachment, appeared to grow worse and worse, was on many occasions more violent and intemperate than any of his political associates. Personally he had much less at stake than most of the leading public men. He was not the Prince's boon companion, like Sheridan. He was not his private friend, like Fox. The irregularities and extravagancies of Carlton House met neither with his encouragement nor his approbation. Though represented by Gilray's satirical pencil as promoting the rumoured marriage of the Prince of Wales with Mrs. Fitzherbert, from his alleged sympathies with the Church of Rome, of that ceremony, whatever he might suspect, he knew nothing; and on other matters of political and domestic economy he was not at all consulted. How far Sheridan may have studiously exerted his influence with the Prince against Burke, who was in every point so much his superior, it is not easy to prove, but not difficult to conjecture. It is certain that when imputations were thrown out against Burke for violently advocating the Prince's claim of right from personal and interested motives, his reply produced general surprise. "I know," said he, "as little of Carlton House as of Buckingham House."\* Indeed, amid the gaiety and revelry in which the Prince and his flatterers delighted to indulge, Burke at this season was, from his years and his character, as much out of place as Lord Clarendon amid the riot and licen-

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxvii. p. 819.

tiousness of the Restoration, as he moodily paced the galleries of Whitehall, the jest of the young and thoughtless, the admiration only of those who had struggled with him in the past days, when the new generation was as yet unborn.

Yet this very circumstance ought naturally to have produced moderation in Burke's views, and some degree of calmness in his speeches. The reverse was the case. When, on the tenth of December, he supported Fox, he accused Pitt of losing his temper, and yet went beyond Pitt himself in violence of expression, distinctly accusing him, amid loud cries of "Order!" from the Treasury Bench, of being one of the competitors for the Regency with the Prince of Wales. At the same time, it cannot be denied that he brought forward some arguments, which were not easy to answer. Was it, or was it not, he asked, a principle of the constitution that the sovereign executive power could never become vacant? Was not the Prince of Wales in his patent of creation declared to be one and the same with the King? Was not the compassing his death declared to be as much high treason as an attempt to destroy the sovereign himself? How could it be said that the heir-apparent stood in the same position as that of the rest of his Majesty's subjects, and that in such circumstances his claim to the Regency was not superior to theirs?\*

Lord Loughborough, in the House of Lords, afterwards adopted the same line of argument, and indeed nearly used Burke's very words. But constitutional philosophy, however sound, is likely to make less impression when the speaker's manner appears wild and eccentric; and this unfortunately was the case when, in nearly all the

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iii. p. 356.

debates on the proposed Regency, Burke rose to address the House. Much brilliant expression and much splendid illustration distinguish those speeches ; but their intemperance repels, even when their genius kindles the highest admiration.

After the Committee had presented their Report, Pitt proposed and carried certain Resolutions in accordance with his own ideas. Both parties had tried their strength when the Report was brought up ; and Ministers found that they could safely count on a majority of between sixty and seventy. The consideration of the third Resolution was resumed on the twenty-second of December. Burke rose very soon after four o'clock, and spoke for nearly three hours. His speech was extremely eloquent, abounding in striking passages ; but his manner had undergone no improvement : he seemed all warmth, excitement, extravagance. Speaking of the expedient of affixing the Great Seal to a Commission which deprived the executive power of its due functions, and made a certain composition of wax and copper stand for the sovereign, he said, " I disclaim all allegiance, I renounce all obedience and loyalty, to a king so chosen and a crown so formed. I have given my allegiance already to the House of Hanover. I worship the gods of our glorious constitution ; but I will not worship the false god, Priapus." Thurlow, as the Chancellor at the head of the Commission, the imaginative orator characterized as the black-browed phantom that was to be set on the throne. Before he sat down he alluded to the reports of a number of peers that were either to be created or advanced, as soon as his Royal Highness should attain the Regency, and asked who could complain if some dignity was to be conferred on the House of Cavendish, or if,

of course, in the person of Lord Fitzwilliam, the title of the Marquis of Rockingham was to be revived? The Ministerialists jeered and shouted at those declarations. Some of Burke's friends pulled him by the coat-tails. He was considered to be letting out the secrets of the Prince's conclaves; and, in saying anything on such a subject, he was thought, by some shrewd observers, who were however little favourable either to him or to his cause, to be in the highest degree indiscreet.\*

His speech appeared only the more violent from the universal moderation which Fox displayed in a later period of the debate. Hitherto his language had been quite as strong as that of his friend; and he it was who first brought forward in Parliament the claim of the Prince of Wales to the Regency, as a hereditary right, which it was not in the power of the two Houses to set aside, and gave Pitt the opportunity, of which he so readily availed, of constituting himself the defender of

\* Sir William Young wrote to the Marquis of Buckingham, who was then Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland: "Edmund Burke arose a little after four. He has been wilder than ever, and laid himself and his party open more than ever speaker did. He is Folly personified, but shaking his cap and bells under the laurel of Genius." Again, "Burke, after I finished my last night's letter, finished his wild speech in a manner next to madness. He let out two of the new titles—Fitzwilliam to be Marquis of Rockingham, and Lord G. Cavendish, jun. His party pulled him; and our friends calling 'Hear, hear,' we lost the rest of the new peers, who would all have come out." (*Memoirs of the Court and Cabinets of George III., by the Duke of Buckingham, vol. ii. pp. 71, 73.*) There is no reason for supposing that had Burke not been interrupted, the rest of the new Peers would have come out. He was particularly attached to Lord Fitzwilliam and the Cavendishes, and may have thought that there was no very great harm in stating that two of his friends of high rank, and of the highest character, were to have some additional rank on the return of their party to power. Sir William Young was an old enemy of the Burkes, from the days of Richard Burke's claims in the island of St. Vincent.



the representative portion of the Legislature. Fox still maintained the same principles ; but in manner he seemed to have undergone a change. Whether it was from the severe indisposition under which he was suffering, and which on a previous day had prevented him from attending, even on so great an occasion, or whether, with the difficulties and uncertainties of his situation, he was anxious to come to some kind of amicable arrangement with Pitt, it is certain that the tone of his speech was unusually calm and conciliating. It was, as Burke himself felt, a speech which might be made on a difference between two friends, instead of on a great contention between two rivals, who had declared and long carried on against each other an internecine war. Pitt on rising praised Fox's candour, perspicuity, and strength, which, he said, not being mingled with the slightest appearance of asperity or unnecessary warmth, gave the greatest possible weight to his arguments. Pitt's praise of Fox, Burke knew to be a very explicit censure upon himself. He was much grieved. He found that even his friends seemed to disregard his counsels, and to keep the secret of their politics to themselves. Why should he provoke enmities in Fox's cause, when Fox himself appeared anxious to come to terms with his foes? Why should he render himself obnoxious to the whole of the Ministerial side of the House by the boldness and determination with which he waged the war, when his leader almost disavowed him, and was ready to hang out a flag of truce?

Burke returned to Beaconsfield for the Christmas in no good humour with himself or his friends. He felt that his vehemence and pertinacity had done no good to the cause, and been most injurious to himself. He

had acted on the supposition that uncompromising boldness and fearless determination were the only course of action worthy of being pursued; and Fox and those most in favour at Carlton House, while they had announced in words the most extreme dogmas, were yet, when the moment of action came, inclined to temporize. Burke's wishes had been to adopt a very different course. Why, thought he, avow monarchical theories of the most extensive application, and afterwards declare absolute submission to the will of the people, as expressed by the two Houses of Parliament, under the direction of Ministers who were only anxious to preserve their power? It was, in his opinion, as unsafe to avow such theories as it was right to act upon them. If the Prince's claim to the Regency was unquestionable as that of the next heir to the Crown, he ought to have taken the initiative, himself have communicated his Majesty's indisposition to Parliament, and have requested their advice and co-operation in circumstances so peculiar and unprecedented. His friends would then have been the proposers; his enemies would have been thrown on the defensive. Other counsels however prevailed. Burke found himself little consulted, and almost slighted. His genius indeed was always expected to be the obedient handmaid of those who scarcely condescended to thank him for the services it so willingly rendered.

At the end of December, the plan of Regency which Pitt had framed was sufficiently far advanced to be communicated to the Prince, whose powers, as the first executive officer in the kingdom, it proposed so rigidly to restrict. This was done by the Minister himself, in a grave and formal letter, in which he and his colleagues are studiously designated as the confidential advisers of

his Majesty, though, at that time, the poor King was certainly not in a state either to give or to withhold any confidence whatever. A reply to this Ministerial epistle was of course necessary ; and the paper which the Prince, for this object, communicated to the Chancellor, to be laid before his colleagues and the two Houses, has been much admired as a model. All the objections to the plan are forcibly and eloquently stated ; and the Prince, while not refusing to exercise the authority intended to be conferred upon him, is made with great address to throw the responsibility of the limitations, and their possible consequences, upon his political opponents by whom they were proposed, and whose ends they were designed to serve. The preparation of such a letter required no common care, and the composition no common pen. A rough draft was found among Burke's papers, and the style and spirit of the document in many portions are undoubtedly his. Sheridan, however, was not likely to permit Burke to have all his own way in writing the letter ; there are traces of two or three different hands ; and alterations have undoubtedly been made, of which the result has evidently been to render the piece as weak, obscure, and hesitating in some portions as in others it is firm, logical, and statesmanlike. Burke, if left to himself, would never have allowed the claim of the Ministers to be his Majesty's confidential servants, not only to be undenied, but even at the outset to be formally recognized.\*

In January, as the plan of Regency was pushed through the House of Commons, Burke was as earnest and indefatigable in his opposition to it as he had been before Christmas. Taking the Report of the Committee of the

\* See the Letter in the *Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxvii. p. 910.

House of Lords as his authority, he argued that the longer the King's malady continued the less grew the hopes of his recovery. He was frequently interrupted by the Ministerialists, and Pitt, while sarcastically lamenting the warmth into which Burke had been betrayed, broadly stated that it could not but arise from his entertaining feelings different from those of the majority of the House, who were ardent in their wishes for his Majesty's recovery. Nothing, Burke retorted, was easier than to impute motives. He would not be browbeaten, even by the Prime Minister. The imputation was a foul calumny, unworthy of proceeding from the lips of the lowest Member of the House. Against the advice even of some of his friends, after the restricting clauses had passed, he persisted on recommitting the Report. His motion was negatived without a division.

He found himself growing daily more excited and anxious, as indeed was his habit on most great occasions. Just as many years before, in very dissimilar circumstances, the Duke of Richmond had frankly told him, that from the earnestness and energy with which he threw himself into the heat of those political battles, people were led to suspect that he had some strong personal and selfish interest at stake; so, in this interregnum, his zeal and passion were the cause of surprise and suspicion. But he was now advancing in years. All this vehemence and combativeness, however natural and justifiable in the young, seemed scarcely so compatible with grey hairs. Burke himself confessed as much. As usual, when he felt himself getting too anxious and excited in these Parliamentary struggles, he returned for a few days in January to his farm at Beaconsfield. There he never sought relief in vain. The fresh air, the morning's ramble, the

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quiet of the woods and fields, soothed his wounded and irritable spirit.

He had, however, much to wound him, and much to irritate him, of which his political enemies took no account and, indeed, never dreamed. Some have delighted to impute Burke's conduct during the stormy events of the latter period of his life to sudden passion and unreasonable anger. Others have attributed it to disgust at the ill success of his party, and especially to his disappointment at the frustration of all the hopes of his friends, by the King's sudden recovery in the last weeks of February. It is important, therefore, to show that, even at the beginning of this memorable year 1789, while the guns of the Bastille still overawed the citizens of Paris, and murder and anarchy fretted themselves restlessly in their lairs, waiting their hour which had not yet come, Burke was not on the best of terms with his party, and particularly with Sheridan and Fox; that his advice was scarcely ever asked, and never attended to; and that so much was he dissatisfied, he most earnestly desired to retire from Parliament and public life altogether. As yet, too, he certainly entertained no hopes whatever of the King's recovery. The favourable symptoms had not yet set in. George III. had for months been insane, and many persons, of whom Burke, as all his speeches in the House of Commons prove, was one, believed him to be incurably insane.

While at Beaconsfield, on the twenty-fourth of January, Burke sat down and wrote a long and confidential letter to Windham. To this sympathizing friend, whose affection and veneration for him increased with the neglect and mortification to which he was exposed from his other political associates, and who, during his recent

labours in Westminster Hall, was always at his side, gazing with tender admiration in his face, ever at hand to render him any little service, and proud to perform even the humblest offices for one whom he so loved and revered, he laid bare his inmost thoughts about his own position in the party, the conduct of their leaders, and the prospects of their situation. The policy previously indicated as his, is in this letter broadly stated, with the declaration that it had been overruled. His wishes, his sentiments, had all been passed over as of no importance. His friends looked coldly upon him. While in private sharing his indignation at the proceedings of the Ministers, they had in the House of Commons adopted a kind of neutral and hesitating policy, contrary in every respect to what he had recommended, and in which he had believed them to concur. He states explicitly that he had made up his mind to retire from Parliament, but that the impeachment of Hastings bound him in honour to continue at his post until it should be concluded. This intention, thus avowed early in 1789, was literally fulfilled. It was not changed in any respect by the French Revolution. With the termination of the Indian prosecution Burke terminated his Parliamentary career. One remark in the letter is most painful. He declares that he was no longer listened to with the attention he once possessed in the House of Commons, and that anything coming from him seemed to lose its natural weight. "I throw out these things to you," he wrote, "and wish to put you in possession of my thoughts, that if they meet with a reception in your mind, you may urge them in a time and place, with a force which, for many reasons (perhaps some of personal fault, or defect, or excess in myself, but most certainly from a sort of habit of having

what I suggest go for nothing), I can no more hope for.”\*

The letter was not sent, but, owing to some delay, delivered by Burke in person to his friend. It concludes most pathetically and affectionately: “Perhaps what I have thrown out is of little moment; at any rate it is in safe hands, it is in the hands of one who will pardon and conceal my weakness.”

On returning again to town he resumed his duties on the Opposition benches. However desponding might be his tone to Windham, he was not less ardent and persevering in his opposition to the Regency Bill, which, after the Ministerial Resolutions had been agreed to by the Lords, was introduced by the Minister into the Commons, and, as a regular Parliamentary measure, pushed through its various stages. The labour Burke had to undergo was sufficiently arduous and sufficiently unthankful. It was made more so by the absence of Fox, and from the intrigues at Carlton House, to which Burke had not the key. Fox had never recovered from the hurry and fatigue of his journey through France during the preceding November; and in the midst of the struggle he was obliged to withdraw himself from the scene, and, as an invalid, drink the waters at Bath. Many persons believed that his illness was most serious, and that there was but little hope of his again taking his place as leader of Opposition, or the still more exalted position as the leading Minister in the new Government which was generally expected to be formed as soon as the Prince of Wales should be formally constituted Regent. His admirers at Brookes’s, who had so long drunk with him and gambled with him after the House had been up

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 91.

for the night, made heavy bets on the probability of his death or recovery, and the odds were not always in his favour. In such circumstances of course Sheridan broke loose from all control, and thought himself fit to direct everything as the Prince of Wales's man. Burke was more slighted than ever, though he bore the full brunt of the conflict on the Opposition benches, and drew upon his head the fiercest hostility of the Ministers and their imposing following.

It might naturally have been supposed that while he was ungraciously treated by his friends he would try to conciliate his foes. Such would unquestionably have been the policy of a man whose ambition was unscrupulous, and whose attachments were lukewarm. It was not, however, in Burke's nature to trim or to compromise. He was all or nothing. No words could be found by him strong enough to characterize Pitt's ambition, or to denounce the restrictions which the Bill imposed upon the Regent. The Partition of Power he declared to be as odious as the Partition Treaty in the reign of King William. The Prince of Wales and the whole House of Brunswick were outlawed, excommunicated, and attainted, as having forfeited the confidence of the country. He was interrupted by a burst of laughter. He went on to affirm that such a Bill was little short of treason, and that the authors of it might one day have to answer to the national justice. Cries of "Order! order!" burst from a hundred lips. Pitt rose and said that he was very reluctant to call for the interference of the House; and that the eccentric and violent manner in which Mr. Burke's arguments were brought forward at once relieved his opponents from the trouble of answering them; but that when any Member stigmatized the deliberate acts of the



House as treason, it was time indeed for some interposition.\*

Burke was ready to repeat and justify his words. As every important clause was considered in Committee, his heat and pertinacity were manifested. Sometimes he was laughed at, at others he was called to order; but he bore up against both ridicule and abuse. The majority were highly indignant at what they called the indecency of some of his remarks on the condition of the unfortunate King. To say that George III. had been struck by the hand of Omnipotence, hurled from his throne by the Almighty, and plunged into a condition which made him an object of pity to the meanest peasant in the kingdom, was, in their opinion, language of the grossest and most revolting kind. How, they asked, dared Mr. Burke say that the King had been hurled from his throne? Why were not his words at once taken down? He said that the poor King was insane, and it was considered improper. He said that though he respected the Queen in her station, her influence ought not to be exerted on one side alone; and that the King's sons, the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York, ought to be admitted to the Council to advise her Majesty in the painful circumstances of her royal husband's illness, quite as much as such courtiers as Dr. Markham, the Archbishop of York, and Thurlow, the Lord Chancellor.

That the orator was sometimes hurried away by his vehemence to let fall expressions which jarred with the feelings of Tory gentlemen, who considered a mad king as much entitled to respect as any other, must candidly be confessed. Perhaps it would have been wiser, it certainly would have been more diplomatic, to have

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxvii. p. 1171.

used eloquent circumlocutions instead of the most direct expressions. But his temper in debate had become almost uncontrollable. When once he became excited and angry under the interruptions and hostility to which he was exposed, he could no longer restrain his feelings. Wisdom there was to be found even in his most violent speeches, and truth in his wildest exaggerations. But the wisdom and the truth were overlooked, and no allowance was made for age, sensibility, virtue, and genius, goaded by cruel wrongs, and not less cruel neglect; misunderstood, depreciated, impoverished, contemned.

Many of those who interrupted him knew little of the pains he was taking to acquire information, and to form a sound judgment on this the most terrible of all human afflictions. His ardour for knowledge could never be suppressed. As a legislator, he never omitted any opportunity or any labour to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the different subjects that came under discussion; no man ever stood up to speak in the House of Commons so completely master of the questions on which he had to deliver an opinion. The same industry which induced him to read and analyze bale after bale of Indian despatches to qualify him to sit in judgment on the errors and crimes of Warren Hastings, led him, during the King's intellectual eclipse, to investigate all the circumstances and history of mental disease. He consulted the best physicians. He talked hour after hour with Dr. Brocklesby. He perused all the medical authors who had written on insanity. He visited the different lunatic asylums, and personally studied the symptoms and examined into the condition of the various patients.\* It was sufficient for Fox to defend logically and vigorously

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxvii. p. 1217.

in the House of Commons, the position he had taken up with but little deliberation. It was sufficient for Sheridan to empty his glass with the Prince of Wales, make his audience laugh with a joke, or excite their surprise by an epigram. But Burke, when he seemed so much their inferior in tact and temper was, even in his errors and eccentricities, still the statesman and the philosopher, rich in learning, rich in genius, glancing far into that future which seemed, amid poverty, defeat, and obloquy to beckon him onward, and to encourage him to carry on the war which the great and noble of the earth have ever waged against ignorance, against selfishness, against the mere gross, human, stupidities of the hour.

On the eleventh of February, the clause providing for the resumption of the government on his Majesty's recovery was discussed. The debate was long; and of the more importance, because it began to be rumoured that the alarming symptoms had subsided, and that the King would soon again be in full possession of his faculties, and able to perform all the functions of a constitutional sovereign. Burke argued that too great precautions could not be taken to establish the fact of the King's restoration to health, because one of the worst evils of insanity was the uncertainty whether the cure of the unhappy patient were complete. In support of his statements he read an extract from an author of great authority, showing that even when every one believed the disease entirely removed, relapses had yet frequently occurred, of the most fatal kind; and that some who had been thought quite well, had killed their fathers, butchered their children, or had hanged, shot, drowned themselves, or thrown themselves out of windows. All this was strictly true; as the experience of every one conversant

with places for the reception of lunatics would amply testify. But to mention such possibilities, even merely as an extract from a medical book, was considered highly improper by the sensitive supporters of Dundas and Pitt. Burke was, for the last time in these discussions, again called to order, and looked upon as a kind of wild man of the woods, who had no regard to the decencies of civilized life when the maladies of sceptred kings were concerned.

The Bill finally passed the House of Commons on the following day. But the discussions in the Lords had only just begun, when later in the same month, Thurlow informed them that the physicians had pronounced the King to be in a state of convalescence. Under such circumstances he considered that it would be indecent to proceed with the measure, and moved the adjournment of the House. Their Lordships obediently adjourned from time to time, until at the beginning of March the King was pronounced quite well, and the discomfiture of the Opposition was complete.

As Burke had taken so active and extreme a part against the Ministers, and had, in debate, spoken of the King's illness with so little reserve, his discomfiture was certainly not less than that of those who had been more guarded in their expressions. His position was one of considerable embarrassment, and not a little mortifying. At him were levelled all the taunts and sneers of the Ministerialists. What had become of all his vehemence? Where were all those confident assertions of the King's recovery being almost hopeless? Of what avail were all those medical authorities, and all those industrious investigations? The prophet, whose predictions had been so summarily refuted by events, ought surely to be covered

with confusion. Those who thus triumphed, of course knew not what we now know. They knew not that the King's malady would ultimately return; how dark and terrible would be the closing days of one who seemed born to so bright a destiny; how, while for years, as the armies of England were to march triumphantly from Madrid to Paris, and come forth victoriously from the conflict with the legions of imperial France, striking for the mastership of the world, the King himself was to be "insensible" to all those glories, his heart broken, his sight darkened, his reason overthrown. Had they known these things, their insolent glorification might possibly have been lessened. They might have admitted that there was the warp of insanity running through George III.'s whole life, and that Burke was not so far wrong when he incurred such bitter reproaches and solemn rebukes for maintaining that the disease was not easily and permanently cured.

The history of his efforts during the King's incapacity would be incomplete without giving the manner in which they were intended to be acknowledged by his friends. Whatever might be the annoyances to which he was exposed in the House of Commons from political opponents whose resentment he incurred by the vehemence and determination of his hostility, still as a public man of eminence and renown, his name was second to none throughout England and the world. He had long been at the height of literary and the height of oratorical fame. He had been a leading Member of Parliament for a generation. During that long period of time he had been the instructor of the Whig party, unmatched in eloquence, unmatched in knowledge. He had taught Fox politics. In every exigency his genius and industry had been the constant resource of the Opposition. Even the men who

had risen to eminence in the party, and were, with him, looked upon as its leaders, were, when compared with him in years and experience, mere children. Yet, it is a curious fact, that, in the lists of the Cabinet which was expected to be formed as soon as the Prince should become Regent, while most of his friends were nominated to high office, his name does not appear.\* For him there was to be no political advancement. What he had been in 1782 and 1783, though even then his exclusion from the first rank of the Ministry excited astonishment, he was still to be. Pitt, before he was twenty-five, had been Prime Minister. Fox, while still in early manhood, had been twice Secretary of State, and leader of the House of Commons. But Burke, after so much more lengthened a Parliamentary service, and with a Parliamentary eminence in no respect inferior, was expected, as a matter of course, even in his old-age, to content himself with an office out of the sacred precincts of the Cabinet.

That he knew of his exclusion, and, though ostensibly acquiescing in it, could not but feel mortified, there is no reason to doubt. To all outward appearance Fox and Burke were as friendly as ever; in the House of Commons and in their occasional correspondence protestations of the utmost devotion were made on both sides; yet the frequency and earnestness of these declarations, paradoxical as it may seem, in some degree diminishes their effect, and raises a suspicion that all was not between them so satisfactory as it ought, and has generally been supposed to have been. Men who feel their friendship securely established, are not continually telling each other of the fact. United, too, as the two Whig statesmen appeared

\* *Memorials and Correspondence of Charles James Fox*, vol. iv.

in their politics, they were however scarcely on visiting terms. Fox very seldom called at Burke's door in town ; and never made his appearance at Beaconsfield. Business and pleasure engrossed all his attention ; while Burke silently felt that his younger associate no longer thought of him or his family, as he had formerly professed to do. Yet Fox was, in a somewhat irregular way, becoming a domestic man himself, through his attachment to Mrs. Armistead, whom he afterwards made his wife ; and he might be expected to appreciate better the quiet joys of a hearth and of a home, than in the days when his estates were lost at faro, and the dissipations of Newmarket alone alternated with the dissipations of Brookes's club. Burke's domestic circle had, however, less attractions for Fox than in the old times of youth and revelry, and this neglect, though nothing was said about it at the time, was by Burke neither unnoticed nor forgotten.\*

The impeachment of Hastings was also a secret and unsuspected element of discord between the two friends. Fox in debate had powerfully advocated the cause of the prosecution, and in Westminster Hall given to his brother manager all the aid of his logic and his eloquence. But he seems from the first rather to have acquiesced in carrying the business up to the House of Lords, than to have ardently encouraged it or enthusiastically promoted it. It suited his purpose, indeed, to win a party victory, and to teach his political enemies, that though defeated, the great Whig connection was not, after all, powerless. It suited his purpose to teach those who were never tired of taunting the Coalition, and boasting of the triumphs which the present occupants of the Treasury Bench had gained, that all the influence of the Court could not save

\* See Parl. Hist., vol. xxix. p. 388.

the offender who clung to the horns of its altar for protection from being dragged into Westminster Hall, and on bended knees brought to supplicate the justice of the Peers. But after this object had been achieved, and the impulse of the moment had passed away, what was there in so laborious an undertaking, worth the consideration of the mere party politician? Justice, philanthropy, the cause of suffering nations, the wrongs of deposed princes, of outraged women, and of stewards deliberately tortured, of peasants beaten with whips and their hands cruelly mutilated: it was doubtless great to plead in favour of India against its cruel oppressor; but did all this display and eloquence, and the magnificent spectacle which the Lords and Commons exhibited in Westminster Hall, lessen Pitt's majority by a single vote? Even though the impeachment were ever so successful, would the Minister's position be in any degree weakened? While it was in progress it evidently increased his influence, by drawing over all the superfluous energy of the Opposition leaders to Westminster Hall; for after their morning's labour in speaking against Hastings, and examining and cross-examining witnesses, they were little inclined to commence and maintain a night's debate in the Commons. The impeachment had become a kind of Ministerial safety-valve: the more Hastings was attacked, the more the reign of Pitt and Dundas was peaceful and secure. And what reason was there for supposing that after all the labours and vexations which the Committee of Managers, the most brilliant and influential leaders of the Opposition, were undergoing, the impeachment would be successful? Everything seemed to show the contrary. Pitt, though he had supported the impeachment, took no active part in its prosecution,



and had become covertly hostile. The Court was averse to it. The majority of the Lords, supporting the Court, were evidently averse to it. Fox considered it a certainty that Hastings would be acquitted. Then the length of the trial promised to be most extraordinary. Only two charges out of twenty had been brought forward during the last session; and with the business of the Regency interfering with the one then in progress, it was clear that there was as yet no prospect of bringing the impeachment to a termination. Francis and Burke, who were most determined to persevere, thought nothing of the difficulties before them, and had no sympathy with Fox's apparent lukewarmness. But Fox was dissatisfied with what had been done, dissatisfied with what had been omitted to be done, and dissatisfied with his colleagues, who were resolved, at any cost, to proceed with the trial until a judgment should be obtained.

Early in the year Francis communicated to Burke the details of a long conversation he had with Fox at Bath about the impeachment. Fox then stated explicitly that there was no chance of convicting Hastings, and that without entering into any recrimination about the past, all they had to do was to persevere and secure an honourable retreat. He was willing to act his part, and, on Francis's own testimony, was declared to have behaved most handsomely. "I think I found him," Francis wrote, "and I am sure I left him, in a better temper on the subject of the impeachment than former appearances, or perhaps my own misapprehensions, had led me to expect."\*

Fox's dissatisfaction at the progress made was shared by the great majority of the public. It was also of

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 86.

course loudly expressed by Hastings's friends, and by all the organs of the press over which they could exert any influence. In February he presented a petition to the House of Lords, complaining of the hardships he was suffering from the length of time occupied by the trial. Several of his judges were already dead. His witnesses were detained for months, and might be for years. His health was grievously impaired. His fortune was seriously impoverished, his costs having already exceeded thirty thousand pounds; and even though his life should be spared until the cause could be finally judged, his character might be blasted by unrefuted criminations on the records, and himself left destitute, not only of the means of defence, but even of subsistence. It cannot be questioned that there was much foundation for the grievances stated in the petition. But it was easier to see the hardship than to devise a remedy. The length of time occupied could scarcely be the fault of the Managers, who had only undertaken to make good the charges voted by the Commons. They were scarcely answerable for the frequent consultations of the judges, when the trial was altogether suspended, nor for the illness of the King and the unsettled condition of the Regency, during which it was of course impossible for the business to be proceeded with at all.

When the King was once more in the full exercise of his royal functions, it became necessary for Burke and his friends to consider seriously what could be done. The judges went on circuit, and it was not until the twenty-first of April that the Lords could again attend to the trial in Westminster Hall. But he and his colleagues having decided that it was impossible to proceed cir-

cumstantially through each article, as they had originally intended, they thought that the only course left for them was to select those accusations which represented different species of criminality, and on them alone to push forward with all convenient despatch. The sixth charge, relating to bribery and corruption, he began to open as soon as the Lords resumed their judicial functions. This was the work which he had especially reserved for Francis, when the majority of the Commons had intervened and refused to appoint him one of the Committee of Management. Demanding an immense amount of local knowledge relating to the collection of the revenue and all the intricate details of Indian finance, it was in many respects the most arduous to master of all those heads of accusation. In default of Francis, it had, as Burke foresaw, fallen to himself; and was no trifling addition to burdens which seemed above any human power of endurance. Though the audience which assembled to hear him was far less numerous than at the beginning of the impeachment, the interest in the proceedings having considerably declined since the King's illness, and since it became manifest that the trial might still continue for an indefinite period, yet the ungracious task was admitted to have been performed with all his usual vigour and animation. The zeal of the public, the zeal of his colleagues might slacken; but his energy and resolution were unabated. On Saturday the twenty-fifth he continued the subject, in a second day's speech, which was followed by so much mortification and annoyance, as would have disheartened any other man, and induced him to throw up his office in anger or despair.

That the Brahmin Nundcomar was really sent to execution at the instigation of Hastings, at the moment

when he was struggling for power and honour against Francis and the majority at the Indian Council Board, is now doubted by none who have with any care and impartiality studied those very painful and dark transactions. In relating the circumstances attending the fall of the cunning and unscrupulous Hindoo's enemy, Mahomed Reza Khan, and the accusations Nundcomar brought against Hastings, Burke in his first day's oration declared that the Governor-General, through his obedient tool, the Chief Justice, who could have respited Nundcomar, had really sent him to the gallows. "I declare," said Burke, "that he murdered this man by the hands of Sir Elijah Impey." These were strong words. Their only justification is, that morally, if not legally, they were strictly true. He said almost nothing more on the subject then, but contented himself with adding, "If Mr. Hastings's counsel should be unwise enough to endeavour to detract from the credit of Nundcomar by the pretended punishment to which he was brought, we will open that dreadful scene to your Lordships; and you will see that it does not detract from his credit, but brings an eternal stain and dishonour upon the justice of Great Britain." It can scarcely be denied that to hang a Hindoo for forgery, according to the strict letter of the English law, with which he was altogether unacquainted, was, and is now universally admitted to have been, a stain upon the justice of Great Britain.

Burke was, however, unexpectedly taken to task for making use of such expressions. The approved Indian tactics of Hastings were, when hard pressed, to turn suddenly round upon his assailant and put him upon the defensive. When Nundcomar accused him of corruption, the Brahmin found himself immediately after-

wards accused of forgery. And from the position of a culprit, Hastings now again became the accuser, and put even Burke himself upon his trial. Major Scott presented a petition from Hastings, complaining that Burke had accused him of several flagrant crimes which were not specified in the articles of impeachment, and among others, of the horrible cruelties perpetrated by Debi Sing and the murder of Nundcomar. He prayed the House either to prosecute him for those atrocities, or to give him some redress.

Fox strongly objected to the reception of such a petition. What, he asked, was the House requested to do? To permit an accused person to arraign the conduct of the Managers of an impeachment voted by the Commons themselves. The complaint had not been made to the Court before which the alleged offence was stated to have been committed, but the Commons were asked to retract all they had done, and to put accusers appointed by themselves in the position of defendants. Such conduct was neither candid nor liberal. If they were tired of the prosecution, if they repented of having begun it, let them boldly and manfully say so. But the Committee of Managers were placed in great and peculiar difficulties. They had a strong claim to the indulgence and protection of the House. The real object of the complaint was manifest. It was to disgust his right honourable friend, Mr. Burke, by a personal insult, and induce him to abandon the business. Fox concluded by entreating the House not to make itself the instrument of such an artifice.

Burke was not prepared to make any apology or excuse. He could not, he said, be deeply affected by the censure of the House of Commons, great and awful

as he admitted it to be. He hoped the Commons would take care of their own honour. Surely they would not censure him without removing him. Surely they would not on one day make him stand his trial there, and the next send him up to Westminster Hall as a Manager and accuser of Warren Hastings upon his trial. He was not young and supple enough for this kind of dancing. He pulled out of his pocket a copy of the Morning Herald, containing the bill for the publication of Major Scott's articles, and particularly dwelt upon the curious item, "Attacking Mr. Burke's veracity, five shillings and sixpence." He was sorry his veracity was not rated higher; nevertheless he was obliged to be content with the market price. It might be from want of taste or curiosity, but he assured the Major he had not read his compositions for the publication of which so much had to be expended, contrary to the practice of authors such as Robertson and Hume, who were paid large sums of money by the booksellers for their works. He admitted that, having to state that one of the bribes which he accused Hastings of receiving had passed through the hands of Nundcomar, he had said that this Brahmin had been murdered by the deliberate arm of the law at the instigation of the Governor-General. It was as impossible for him to proceed with the charges against the accused without using one extraneous word as it was for Shylock to take away a pound of flesh without spilling a drop of blood. In order to make the business intelligible to their Lordships, he could not but enter into the history of the country, the revolutions that had occurred, the actors who had been engaged in those revolutions, the mock trials, and the collusive acquittals. All this he had done in order to show that Hastings's

conduct had been one tissue of crimes, and for a fair consideration of the manner of doing it he relied implicitly on the justice of the House.\*

It was determined, however, that the petition should be received. After it had been read, Burke rose and spoke of the gallant Major as the known libeller of the House. He was called to order. An indecent attack, Scott said, had been made upon his character. He was Mr. Hastings's agent; but he was as independent a man as his right honourable accuser. Burke again brought forth the *Morning Herald*, and observed that the man who paid money for the insertion of attacks in newspapers upon persons of the most respectable character for only doing their duty in the House of Commons, must on good grounds be considered a libeller. Scott seemed again confident of Ministerial support. He named the following Thursday as the day to take the petition into consideration, for no other reason than because that was the day on which Burke was to continue his speech before the House of Lords. Though the Opposition loudly complained of the obvious impropriety of making the Managers, after they had been sent as accusers to the House of Lords, return on the same evening to the House of Commons to be accused themselves, Pitt asserted that the objection might be done away with by sending a message to the Lords requesting them to put off the trial to the following Friday, and, notwithstanding Burke's earnest remonstrances, Thursday the thirtieth of April was the day fixed for this mortifying business.

On that afternoon the Minister moved a formal resolution, giving Burke notice that a petition having been

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iii. p. 424.

presented against him as one of the Managers of the prosecution, the House would on the next day enter upon the subject. Burke, when the question came on, was not found in his place. But his friend Mr. Frederick Montague read as a part of his speech a letter he had received from him as an apology for not entering on any formal defence. The tone of the letter was firm and dignified; indeed the Ministerialists considered it unreasonably high. "The only favour," he wrote, "I have to supplicate from the House is, that their goodness would spare to the weakest of their Members an unnecessary labour, by letting me know as speedily as possible whether they wish to discharge me from my present office: if they do not, I solemnly promise them that, with God's assistance, I will, as a member of their Committee, pursue their business to the end; that no momentary disfavour shall slacken my diligence in the great cause they have undertaken; that I will lay open, with the force of irresistible proof, this dark scene of bribery, peculation, and gross pecuniary corruption, which I have begun to unfold, and in the midst of which my course has been arrested." He added, "Neither hope, nor fear, nor anger, shall remove me from this trust; nothing but an act of the House formally taking away my commission, or totally cutting off the means of performing it." After reading this epistle, Montague, whose moderation and uprightness were admitted even by George III. himself and his courtiers, who spoke all evil of the other members of the Opposition,\* concluded with the following remarks:—"I have been honoured with Mr. Burke's friendship these four-and-twenty years. I will not mention the

\* Madame d'Arblay's Diary, vol. iv.



brilliancy of his imagination, the strength and depth of his understanding, or the energy of his eloquence. They are confessed by all. It may at once be said of my right honourable friend, that he has embraced the whole compass of human knowledge. But what I most admire in my friend, are the qualities of his heart, his consummate integrity, and his unbounded benevolence.”\*

These were the words of one who knew Burke well, and was well qualified to speak from that knowledge. He was of a somewhat different character from a Major Scott, who was of course eager to see the most formidable and resolute of the Managers for the impeachment disarmed, and who rose after Frederick Montague sat down and entreated the House to go on with the complaint. The Opposition moved the adjournment, but the motion was negatived by one hundred and fifty-seven votes against ninety-seven. A question then arose as to the form of proceeding. A Committee was appointed to examine precedents. On the fourth of May their Report was brought up, stating that no precedents could be found respecting any complaint made about expressions used by managers of impeachments; and they recommended that the shorthand writer officially appointed to take minutes of the trial should be called in and examined. Pitt and the Ministerialists contended that the only subject for their consideration was the recent imputation respecting the execution of Nundcomar; for that a year had expired since the other expressions were used, and as they had not then been made the cause of complaint, they could not fairly be entered into after the lapse of such a length of time.

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxvii. p. 1377.

It was voted, after some opposition, that Mr. Gurney, the gentleman whose reports of the speeches made at the trial are now in course of publication, should be ordered to appear. He was asked, "Did you hear Mr. Burke say, before the Lords, that 'He murdered that man by the hands of Sir Elijah Impey,' or words to that effect?" "I remember words to that effect," was the reply. The Speaker requested him to refer to his notes, which of course confirmed his statement. Major Scott, with his usual discretion, wished the shorthand writer to express his opinion as to the persons Mr. Burke meant when he used the words "he" and "that man;" but it being considered highly improper to ask a stranger for the interpretation of a Member's words, the incomparable agent, as Hastings himself called him, was obliged to withdraw his question. After much further discussion, and another examination of the shorthand writer, one of Pitt's enthusiastic admirers and unhesitating supporters, the Marquis of Graham, moved that no authority had been given to the Managers of the impeachment to make any charge against Hastings for the condemnation or execution of Nundcomar.\*

Was this, Sheridan asked, the only resolution intended to be brought forward? The noble Marquis replied that he knew of no other. "Then," said Fox, "I see no objection to it, and I shall not trouble the House with any arguments against it, since if the motion be carried it will still be competent for me, Mr. Burke, or any other Manager, to repeat the same words." This was a somewhat imprudent declaration. What the supporters of Hastings wanted was not a resolution which might be differently construed, and be passed unani-

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxvii. p. 1405.

mously, but a vote directly casting a slur upon Burke, such as might compel him and the rest of the Managers to withdraw from the impeachment altogether. A vote which the Opposition maintained to be no censure would not serve the purpose. After Fox, Sheridan, and Windham had all declared that they had a perfect right still to allude to the judicial murder of Nundcomar, the Marquis of Graham, stimulated by Major Scott and others, again came forward, and in opposition to his former assertion, proposed adding to his resolutions another sentence, declaring that, in the opinion of the House, the words Burke had used respecting the great Brahmin's execution ought not to have been spoken. Fox moved an amendment, and with great warmth stigmatized the conduct of the proposers and supporters of the resolution as in the highest degree uncandid and treacherous. He was called to order by Colonel Phipps, the seconder of the amended resolution, for using language not to be tolerated among gentlemen. A scene of great excitement and uproar ensued. All strangers were ordered to withdraw. Pitt rose. Having supported the original resolution, he now supported the new clause, though he did not, he said, wish it to be considered a censure upon Burke, and had not even desired it to be added at all. Fox's amendment was negatived. The censorial resolution was carried by a majority of more than two to one. Burke's friends then thought that the sting of the condemnation might in some degree be alleviated by a vote of thanks to himself and the rest of the Committee of Managers. But on the plea that such a proposition was premature, the previous question was put and carried.\* The vote of censure on Burke was placed

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxvii. p. 1422.

upon the journals; and, though Fox threatened to expunge it whenever an opportunity should offer, there it still remains.

The resolution was carried on Monday, May the fourth. Tuesday, the next day, was appointed for the continuation of the charge of bribery and peculation which Burke was then employed in opening. He was placed in no pleasant dilemma. To appear in the House of Lords with the vote of censure, which he had just read that morning, in his hands, could not but be mortifying. To decline to appear, and to propose an adjournment of the trial, would look very much like, and perhaps would lead to, the abandonment of the prosecution altogether. When the House of Commons assembled previous to attending the trial on the Tuesday morning, it was not decided what should be done. Some of the Managers came down in full dress. The Lords were assembling. Westminster Hall was crowded. Still Burke and his friends had not come to any decision. This was partly owing to the absence of the acknowledged leader of the party, Charles Fox, who had never communicated with Burke as to his wishes, and was most probably still in bed. At last one or two Members in undress came in: they informed Burke that Fox had settled with them that the trial should be adjourned for a day or two. There arose a difference of opinion.\* The majority of the Managers, with Burke at their head, thought that nothing could be worse than to move in a thin House, against the wishes of many of their party, a message to the Lords for another adjournment. He felt himself compelled, in Fox's absence, to act contrary to his advice; and, sending two of his

\* See Annual Register, 1789, p. 163.

friends to inform him of the step he was about to take, he, though with much anxiety, hurried, with the rest of the Managers, to Westminster Hall to begin the business of the day.

He was very ill. The vexation he had suffered from the vote of censure, combined with all the trouble he had undergone during the discussions on the Regency question, and the labour he was still undergoing in the prosecution of the impeachment, were too much even for his indomitable energy. He seldom in his life felt more indisposed than on that morning: his blood was on fire; his mouth was parched with thirst; he was obliged to drink draught after draught of cold water to keep down the fever that burnt within him. But the zeal with which he was animated was not to be extinguished by severe illness, by thankless labour, by deliberate insult. The censure of the House of Commons he received with submission and with humility. But he rose up again with all the spirit of the martyrs of old. Not in his hands should the cause of justice and humanity suffer. Not by him should the grievously outraged and oppressed people of India be deserted. He had acted neither from impulse, nor passion, nor vanity, nor self-interest, when he began the prosecution; neither impulse, nor passion, nor vanity, nor self-interest, would induce him to give it up. A majority of the House, under the encouragement of a time-serving Minister, might vote that it was wrong in him to say that Hastings had hanged Nundcomar. But Hastings had hanged Nundcomar. A majority of the House of Commons and their votes of censure could not alter facts, nor prevent the legitimate conclusion of unbiassed reason from the clearest circumstantial evidence. What

then became of the censure of the House of Commons? Burke declared that as he stood up, with that recorded resolution in his hands, to address the House of Lords, it was the proudest hour of his life. "Had there been," said he in conversation afterwards, "no higher motive, no moral principle at work to induce me to persevere, the disgrace of such a retreat on account of such a provocation, and the weakness of mind it would have indicated, must have proved fatal to any public character."

As soon as the proclamation was made, calling upon the prosecutors to make good the charges against the accused, Burke stood forward. The interest in the trial seemed suddenly to have revived. It having become known that he had been censured, and doubtful what course he would take under the circumstances, the Hall was fuller than it had been on some more recent occasions. How would the great accuser conduct himself? Would his voice falter, his manner be embarrassed, and his eyes be cast down with shame? Not at all. He appeared even more than usually grave and earnest; he was labouring under suppressed emotion; but though censured, he did not look like a man conscious of being disgraced. He at once alluded to the resolution which had been passed, and the fact of his having been disavowed, in language which, though ostensibly most respectful to the Commons, of whom he was the organ, was, so far from being abject, covertly sarcastic, ironical, and indignant. "My Lords," said he, "I have been disavowed by those who sent me here to represent them. My Lords, I have been disavowed in a material part of that engagement which I had pledged myself to this House to perform. My Lords, that disavowal has been followed by a censure;

and yet, my Lords, so censured and so disavowed, and by such an authority, I am sent here again to this place of my offence, under the same commission, by the same authority, to make good the same charge, against the same delinquent." Was it, he demanded, from mistaken tenderness that the Commons had censured him, and again sent him to perform the duty they had ordered him to undertake? No! it showed their sincerity. It proved that they were zealous in the prosecution. While they censured him, it only evinced that they the more applauded him for his earnestness in the cause; and therefore instructed but not dismayed, they had sent him again to pursue the prosecution against Warren Hastings, Esq.\* He read the resolution, and commented upon it, in the presence of those who had been most eager to vote for it, and who had hurried exultingly that morning to Westminster Hall, to gloat over his mortification. After speaking for more than half an hour on this unexpected episode, he resumed the thread of his long recital, that, from the obscurity and intricacy in which many of the cases of peculation and extortion were involved, would have deterred any other prosecutor from endeavouring to present it in explicit detail before so fastidious and supercilious an audience. What cared the great majority of fashionable noblemen for the hoards of the banyan Gunga Govin Sing, the gains of the usurer Nobkissen, the inexplicable explanations of the Accountant-General Larkins? What cared they for Durbar charges, caboleats amounting to ninety-five thousand pounds, the four per cent Remittance Loan, the sundry payments made to Cheyt Sing's buxey, the Nuddea Patna, and Dinagepore peshcushs?

\* Works and Correspondence, vol. vii. p. 571.

All these mysteries Burke, however, persevered in revealing, though it was not possible even for him to make such revelations always interesting and amusing. Many noble Lords, who sat listlessly yawning while the torrent of eloquence rolled on, occasionally looked at him as at one who was talking unknown tongues. India was then far more an abstraction than it has now happily become. There seemed nothing in the cruelties practised on the servants of a Munny Begum to excite the sympathies even of educated Englishmen. They saw everything in India through a dense medium of ignorance and prejudice, and believed Burke to be the dupe of his own intense susceptibility, scared at spectres and imaginary atrocities; while the spectres were in truth human beings, and the imaginary atrocities real crimes. The charge of bribery was not terminated by him until Thursday, the seventh, when he brought the speech of four days to a close, by a solemn appeal to the high tribunal, that when the riches of India, however unjustly acquired, were being poured into the kingdom every day, to the great detriment of virtue, the national character, and the independence of the representative portion of the Legislature, the freedom of the Commons might be preserved by the justice of the Lords.\*

At the beginning of the following week, after the censure and the Tuesday and Thursday's oratorical efforts, he learnt that Fox was displeased. Nothing more clearly shows how little real intercourse there was between these two public men, at the time when they have been represented as such attached friends, than the fact that they do not appear to have met to exchange a word, or to enter into any explanations on political business, during the

\* Works and Correspondence, vol. viii. p. 37.



week when Burke was so busy in Westminster Hall, notwithstanding the vexation he had undergone. But on the next Monday he received a letter from Fox, complaining in the conclusion that his advice had not been attended to, when Burke without a day's delay had proceeded with the impeachment after the vote of censure, and adding that, though he forgave it, he could not but feel such treatment as personally unkind. Burke replied with great frankness and cordiality. But he manifested a consciousness of the arts which Sheridan and others were employing to damage him in the estimation of his friend, and which, indeed, had more influence in producing the final rupture of this friendship than all political differences. "It is certainly," Burke answered, "good to be pardoned; but to stand in need of a pardon is not so pleasant. I am persuaded that you have received some very erroneous account of the transaction, or you could not possibly have felt, much less retained, any soreness about it." He then gave a clear and straightforward explanation of his reasons for acting as he had done, at which it seems impossible to cavil. He finally added: "Surely it is time when those who love and trust each other, as I hope is the case with us two, ought not to permit any soreness in our minds from mistakes that could not arise from any unfriendly intention. There are enough of those who have no good will to either of us, and who will not forgive us our mistakes. Adieu! and believe me, with some uneasy sense of your letter, but always most truly and faithfully, your old friend, Edmund Burke." \*

This letter, with all its affection, has on its surface some of the shadow of coming events. It is evident

\* Fox's Memorials and Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 358.

from it that the coldness between the two friends had begun; that insidious agents were at work, desirous of producing a breach between them; and that already, on Fox's part, the feeling of estrangement had gone so far as to find direct expression in a written communication to Burke himself. A disposition to quarrel, or an eagerness to seize a pretence of throwing off his party, such as has been laid to Burke's charge, is certainly not manifest. He is anxious to remove all unpleasantness from Fox's mind. Whatever might be the just grounds of discontent which he believed himself to possess, and which he had recently intimated to Windham, he does not for one moment appear to imagine that himself and Fox would ever become separated in politics, advocate contrary principles, and sit on opposite benches.

Censured by his political enemies, intrigued against by some who professed themselves his friends, and even admonished in no pleasing style by him who had been his pupil, and had become, mainly through his instrumentality, the leader of his party, Burke still continued to do what he thought to be his duty in the House of Commons as well as in Westminster Hall.

Every good cause still found in him an advocate. On the day after he replied to Fox's letter, he went down to the House of Commons to support Wilberforce, who moved twelve resolutions against the slave-trade. These resolutions were founded on a report of evidence taken before the Privy Council. Burke's speech was, however, more emphatically against the slave-trade in general than in favour of the particular propositions; he thought it better to grapple at once with the evil, than to feel the way by passing abstract resolutions, which, as he can-

didly said, seldom met with his approval. While earnestly advocating the abolition, he warned the House to consider well what they were about. They must be prepared to make great sacrifices : they must be prepared to pay the price of virtue. Compensation might be given to the West Indian planters ; but it was ridiculous to suppose that any arrangement could be effected without great losses. Still the trade must be abolished : it was a disgrace to human nature. Admiral Barrington, speaking from what he had observed in the West Indies, had remarked that slaves were happy. What was, however, the meaning of a happy slave ? In proportion as the mind grew callous to its degradation, all sense of manly pride was lost ; nothing could make a happy slave but a degraded man.\* Some days later, when the House was again in committee on the same subject, Burke again spoke. He wanted no further evidence : the African slave-trade was absolute robbery. It could, and it ought to be abolished. Wherever slavery was planted, civilization could either not take root at all, or must wither and die. Every country that had encouraged the traffic had sunk deeper and deeper into barbarism ; and so it must ever be, where the bodies of men and women were bought and sold. It was impossible to civilize a slave.†

The extension of some penal laws with regard to the destruction of shrubs and plantations, he also earnestly opposed. He said that he had always been against making every light offence a matter for criminal punishment ; and that, wherever it was possible, a civil remedy was infinitely preferable. He recommended a thorough

\* Parl. Hist., vol xxviii. p. 68.

† Ibid., p. 90.

revision of the whole criminal code, emphatically declaring it to be, as it then stood, abominable.\*

One of his last efforts during this session, on the choice of a Speaker in the place of William Grenville, who was appointed a Secretary of State, also contained some very remarkable observations. Two candidates were started for the office,—Henry Addington, on the part of the Ministry, and Sir Gilbert Elliot, on the part of the Opposition. Addington was a young and almost untried politician; Sir Gilbert Elliot, one of the most matured and respected characters in the House of Commons. Pitt's friendship, to which the son of the Reading physician owed his nomination, rendered Addington's election a matter of course. But the Opposition did their best for their champion in a cause which they knew to be hopeless. Though now old himself, Burke did not forget that he had once been young. As a public man he had ever been the adviser and encourager of the young, and continued to be so to his last hour. "Whatever faults I may have," he said, on this question of the Speakership, "I never have attempted to depreciate rising talents. On the contrary, if I have ever had any merit, it was in hailing those superior talents whenever I have discovered them. The blossoming abilities of young Members have always afforded me the highest satisfaction, because they have struck me as a renovation of the stock of public talent, and a pleasing earnest of the preservation of the constitution." † On a subsequent occasion, when he was fast declining to the tomb, and had left the House of Commons and the bustling metropolis for ever, he again put forward the same claim to appro-

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iii. p. 441.

† Parl. Hist., vol. xxviii. p. 155.

bation, and many who were then on bad terms with him, including Charles Fox himself, were living witnesses that it was just. He had done for others what they were not ready to do for him, or for that son who was to him so dear. "I have been through life," he most truly wrote, "ever willing to give everything to others; and to reserve nothing for myself but the inward consciousness that I had omitted no pains to discover, to animate, to discipline, to direct the abilities of the country for its service, and to place them in the best light to improve their age, or to adorn it. This conscience I have: I have never suppressed any man; never checked him for a moment in his course, by any jealousy or by any policy. I was always ready to the height of my means (and they were always infinitely below my desires) to forward those abilities which overpowered my own."\*

The people at that time knew not of these things. At the close of the session of 1789, after so much vexation and obloquy, he had good reason for longing to retire from Parliament altogether. What had he gained by twenty-four years of public service, twenty-four years of the most scrupulous disinterestedness, twenty-four years of unprecedented labour, twenty-four years exertion of the noblest genius allotted to any statesman that had ever existed in ancient or modern time? He had not even gained, or was thought fit to gain, a seat in the Cabinet. Though so devotedly attached to the Whig party, of which he had long been the proudest boast and the most brilliant ornament, in fact, he stood alone. Those who were nominally his associates disdained to co-operate with him, slighted him, refused to consult him, and seemed anxious to get rid of him. His political

\* Letter to a Noble Lord, 1796.

enemies of course hated him : they hated him much for his vehemence and intemperance in debate ; they hated him more for those virtues which they endeavoured not to recognize, and that fervent philanthropy which they could scarcely comprehend. In the country, among the great body of the people, who had no interest in depreciating him, and who ought to have respected him, he was most unpopular ; and it would be difficult to say for what, unless for bearing the disgrace of other men's failures, and the odium of other men's mistakes. All that he had done was forgotten. All that he was striving to do was scoffed at and misunderstood. At no time since he had achieved political eminence, was his name, either in his own party, in the Ministerial ranks, or among the multitude out of doors, less potent than in the summer of 1789.

But in a few months more all this changed. The rebound was rapid and tremendous. It was yet to be seen what a man he was. His friends, his enemies, the English people, all civilized nations, were to be taught a lesson. His friends were to learn that, if his support was of no account, at least his hostility was to be dreaded ; for that he held their political fortunes in his possession, and was to strike a blow from which the party would not recover for more than a generation. His enemies were to receive him with enthusiasm, look upon him as a prophet, and even in courtly circles for the first time in his life, his name was to be mentioned as that of the most eloquent champion of prerogative and established authority. Kings were to receive his sentiments as inspirations. His genius was to become a kind of European power. Unaided and unencouraged, his own hands were to grapple with, and for the moment appear to arrest the course of

the most gigantic revolution that the political world had yet known ; and even those who rejoiced at the ultimate frustration of his efforts to check its advance abroad, could not but themselves admit that, by the spirit he invoked at home, the precepts he taught, and the example he set, he unquestionably, in that dark hour, staved off its approach from the British shores.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

1789-1790.

## AT THE OUTBREAK OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

ONCE more the shades of Beaconsfield welcomed Burke to rural quiet and soothing meditation. Once more he walked out in the morning with the axe or spod in his hand, to cut away the dead branches from his trees, or to dig up any unsightly weeds from his grounds. The stacks of hay which had been newly piled were carefully inspected, and their value duly estimated by the Squire, as he chatted with the small farmers of the neighbourhood who sought his acquaintance, and were proud to see him listen with deference to their observations on all the details of husbandry. They had their grievances, as he had his, against the troublesome lord of the manor; Mr. Waller's last act of annoyance was discussed over, and the means of paying him back in his own coin eagerly suggested and chuckled at, though this rural war, as far as Burke had anything to do with it, remained perfectly harmless. The cattle had all to be carefully looked at; his favourite horses patted on their heads; his pet lambs, of which some had grown to be grave and venerable sheep, that followed him across the fields like dogs, affectionately greeted; the corn, which was just changing from green to gold, anxiously surveyed, and the probabilities of a good harvest in Buckinghamshire,



and throughout the rest of the country, seriously considered. The waggons which were being laden with vegetables for the next morning's market in Covent Garden were also visited; and the sturdy labourers, every man of whom he knew personally, were met with a kind smile, a word of comfort, or perhaps something more substantial if their wives or children were ill, or any other misfortune was pressing them hard.

The morning would be thus spent rapidly and pleasantly. He would return home somewhat tired, for he was no longer young, in time to receive the boy with the letters that had just come by the mail, of which the sound of the horn and the rattle of the wheels he had heard while in the fields, as it gaily entered Beaconsfield, and then dashed down the Oxford road. The contents of the boy's postbag seldom failed to recall the cares of the statesman: letters had to be written in reply to some that he had received; and the events of the busy world, which he had temporarily forgotten, again occupied his thoughts. But the early dinner-hour came, and the cordial glances and pleasant talk of those whom he loved best; and his brow became again serene, and his look cheerful. An hour or two's quiet lolling in an easy-chair, with the morning newspaper or a new book in his hand, brought on the evening, when a walk in his grove, and another look through the farmyard and orchards, would generally terminate his country day; and he and the family would not unfrequently retire to rest at nine o'clock.

The little town of Beaconsfield, and the pleasant fields around, seemed almost shut out from the great world of governments, ministers, and parties. Thence, as Burke early in July looked at the political horizon, all seemed

lowering and distressing. Nine months of incessant and arduous labour had resulted in nothing but defeat and vexation of spirit. In the early days of July, notwithstanding his farming occupations and the delights of his country home, he could not feel comfortable. He was still feverish; his mind was not at rest. Whenever he thought of political affairs he became uneasy. He seemed to have a strange foreboding of some great danger, of some mighty event which was to shake the world. He felt as men feel when a great storm is approaching; when the sky is completely overcast, the wind howling, and the first big drops of the thunderstorm are falling on the ground; and he was anxious to shelter himself in his rural home from the tempest which he thought about to burst forth with desolating violence. On the tenth of July, he gave utterance to this feeling in a letter to his old friend Lord Charlemont, then residing at his handsome sea-side residence in the neighbourhood of the Irish capital. "I do not wish," he wrote, "to revive in your mind what your best philosophy is required to make tolerable. Enjoy your Marino and your amiable and excellent family. These are comfortable sanctuaries, when more extensive views of society are gloomy and unpleasant and unsafe."\* Four days later something more than a tempest, however furious, had commenced. The great earthquake which was to convulse all society, overturn institutions, and shatter thrones, and which was not to have spent its force even in our day, had reverberated through the French capital, making the Bastille fall to the ground, causing all France to start at the unaccustomed sounds, and awakening a lively interest in all the countries of Europe, and in the backwoods of Ame-

\* Hardy's *Life of Lord Charlemont*, p. 321, edit. 1810.

rica. A ruddy-faced postboy, fat with dumpling and corned beef, and stained with the soil of many ploughed lands, opens a rude and well-worn leather bag, for the meagre newspaper which informs Burke, as he comes from superintending the reapers in his fields, that the French Revolution has begun.

He had indeed food for meditation and reflection. On Tuesday the fourteenth of July, the proud Bastile, with its deep ditches, lofty towers, frowning ramparts, and heavy artillery, had, after a seige of two hours, been taken by a mob. The Governor had been murdered; the prisoners had been released from their cells; and insurrection, after having long been gathering strength, was omnipotent in Paris. The popular triumph was great: but was this really Liberty, that, with unsullied brow and majestic demeanour, was establishing her empire on the ruins of an exploded French despotism? It might be so; and yet, as day by day in July and August the contents of the newspapers were eagerly devoured, and the letters of sanguine correspondents in the French capital impatiently perused by Burke at Beaconsfield, to him all seemed not well. Unoffending victims hanged on the lamp-posts, others shot down in cold blood, their bodies mutilated, their heads carried about exultingly on poles, the soldiers refusing to obey their officers, and in defiance of all military allegiance making common cause with the citizens, the National Assembly at Versailles unable to secure freedom of deliberation, and trembling at its real master, the mob in Paris; the King, though every moment in danger of assassination, compelled to go in person to his capital, and virtually lay his crown at the feet of the riotous populace; nobles and princes of the blood flying from France, and obliged to seek the

hospitality of strangers ; every day songs stimulating the lowest classes to a cannibal ferocity, and almost every day some atrocious murder committed under the mask of patriotism, but without even the pretence of a judicial investigation : was this the freedom which the patriots of Greece and Rome sternly worshipped as a divinity, and for which the most upright and conscientious of Englishmen had drawn their swords against Charles the First, and triumphantly asserted for themselves and for all coming generations against James the Second ? It seemed to Burke, who had such a vivid remembrance of what he himself witnessed and suffered at the time, more like the Gordon riots in 1780, when London became the prey of a wild and lawless mob, who robbed and pillaged with the cry of No Popery ! and The Protestant Religion ! on their lips. It seemed to him, as he looked forth from his watchtower at Beaconsfield, to bear a still more fatal likeness to what he had read in French annals and of French character in the sanguinary days of the Jacquerie and the massacre of St. Bartholomew ; for this was not the first time in the history of France that similar evil passions had been exhibited, and on a scale of almost equal grandeur.

His judgment remained for a time in suspense, though the side to which it inclined was not doubtful. As early as the first week of August he began to look with suspicion and distrust on the whole movement, while as yet all other English statesmen saw nothing in what was happening in France but the dawn of a golden era of political freedom, like that which their own country had so long and so happily enjoyed. On the ninth of the month, Burke, writing again to Lord Charlemont, gave free expression to his thoughts, in a letter which has

been often quoted by others, and which, in order that the development of his convictions on this great subject may be clearly traced and recorded, it is necessary to quote again. It shows him watching attentively every indication as it arose, as the sailor scans the horizon when the winds are blowing hard, or the physician deliberates on every symptom of his patient to form his conclusions on the prospects of health and disease. The wisdom of the observations are truly astonishing; though those who have sneered at what they call rose-water revolutions, ignorant of or indifferent to the fact, that they are excusing and encouraging, for the sake of a theory, the most bloody crimes which the worst passions of human nature can commit, may think them of little value, even while it would be difficult to show from history that, as a revolutionary agent working beneficially for mankind, blood has been in any respect more effectual than the much derided rose-water. "As to us here," wrote Burke from Beaconsfield, "our thoughts of everything at home are suspended by our astonishment at the wonderful spectacle which is exhibited in a neighbouring and rival country. What spectators, and what actors! England gazing with astonishment at a French struggle for liberty, and not knowing whether to blame or applaud. The thing indeed, though I thought I saw something like it in progress for several years, has still somewhat in it paradoxical and mysterious. The spirit it is impossible not to admire; but the old Parisian ferocity has broken out in a shocking manner. It is true that this may be no more than a sudden explosion; if so, no indication can be taken from it; but if it should be *character*, rather than accident, then that people are not fit for liberty, and must have a strong hand, like

that of their former masters, to coerce them. Men must have a certain fund of natural moderation to qualify them for freedom, else it becomes noxious to themselves, and a perfect nuisance to everybody else. What will be the event, it is hard, I think, still to say. To form a solid constitution requires wisdom as well as spirit; and, whether the French have wise heads among them, or if they possess such, whether they have authority equal to their wisdom, is yet to be seen. In the mean time, the progress of the whole affair is one of the most curious matters of speculation that ever was exhibited.”\*

As yet then the progress of the French Revolution was with him merely a matter of curious speculation. Good might come of it, or evil; he knew not which; but from the unhesitating violence and unmitigated ferocity displayed in the popular tumults, he almost believed, though with reluctance, that the evil, for his time at least, which was all that he would ever take into his calculation, might preponderate over the good. He was as yet far from entertaining any suspicion that the wild work which excited his curiosity in France, would influence the political condition of England, that it would in any way alter the relative condition of English parties, still less that it would produce an irreparable breach between him and those with whom he had been acting ever since some of them had entered public life. So far from thinking that Fox and himself would publicly quarrel on this subject, Burke in this September, while his thoughts were so much occupied with French affairs, and his imagination and reason were spell-bound and fascinated at the strange scenes that were being enacted on the great Continental stage, appeared to have a re-

\* Hardy's Life of Lord Charlemont, p. 322, edit. 1810.

vival of all the old affection for his friend Charles, which began so early and deepened during the calamities and misfortunes of the American war. Even the dissenting classes and the most eminent of their leaders, Priestley and Price, were as yet regarded by Burke with no positive feeling of hostility.

One of the most respectable of their body, a Mr. Blair, had just become the tenant of a house near Beaconsfield. That house had also, much to Burke's horror, been nearly taken by Sir Elijah Impey; and while congratulating himself on his narrow escape from such a neighbour, Burke was inclined to look with very favourable eyes on his new acquaintance. He discovered that Mr. Blair was discontented with Fox, because he had not received an answer to an application that he had addressed to him, requesting him to use his influence with the Prince of Wales for permission to allow Dr. Priestley to dedicate some of his scientific treatises to his Royal Highness. As soon as Burke learnt that Dr. Priestley and his neighbour were really offended at this oversight, he wrote to Fox, advising him to induce the Prince to comply with Priestley's desire. Surely, he observed, it could do the Prince no harm to be considered an encourager of science. Besides, Priestley was one of the most eminent leaders of the Dissenters, whose political influence, especially at elections, was very great. Ever since the Coalition, their weight had been thrown into the scale of the Court; and this unnatural union of Tories and Dissenters had no inconsiderable influence in weakening the ranks of the Whigs and keeping them unpopular. "It would be material to you," Burke wrote to Fox on the ninth of September, "to gain entirely some of these Dissenters, who are already, I fancy, inclined to come over to you.

This offer to dedicate to the Prince is a strong overt act of that disposition. Even if they cannot be wholly won, it would be something to neutralize the acid of this sharp and eager description of men." So much for the politician: now for the friend. The letter concludes with one of those comparisons, which Burke delighted to draw, between his humble farming pursuits in the country, and the stirring occupations of the great world, from which he was so glad to retreat. "I suppose," so ran the last paragraph, "we are not to flatter ourselves with seeing you here very speedily. When you can come, you will make us very happy. My barley has made me a little melancholy, but we are now in great spirits. We are as subject to ups and downs in our carts and waggons, as those that glory carries *ventoso curru*. I wish you a good journey in yours."\*

Thus in September all seemed well between the two friends. But Fox's visit to Beaconsfield, whither Burke so pressingly invited him, was not made; and the first days of October came, bringing with them the insurrection of women, the march to Versailles, the storm of the castle, the massacre of the guards, the invasion of the Queen's bed-chamber, and all the attendant horrors, which were only terminated by Louis XVI.'s unconditional acceptance of the principles of that strange Constitution which had been so hastily and so imprudently fabricated, and the conveyance of the King and the royal family to Paris, where, under all external forms of respect, they were made prisoners of state. Whatever doubts Burke had hitherto entertained as to the beneficial nature of the French Revolution, and the wisdom of the actors in it, were finally set at rest. Whatever

\* Memorials and Correspondence of Fox, vol. ii. p. 360.



might still be the sanguine anticipations of others, he now made up his mind to expect in France only a succession of bloody and extravagant scenes, in which the populace ruled, and the voice of all the temperate and intelligent classes were peremptorily silenced. Fox, ardent, enthusiastic, intrepid, still rejoiced at the drama that was then in progress, and thought only of the ultimate good it would produce; he remained steadily attached to the opinion he had from the first expressed to Fitzpatrick: "How much," exclaimed he, "the greatest event it is that ever happened in the world! and how much the best!"\* But Burke became, so early as the autumn of 1789, convinced that, from the extreme principles which had been proclaimed, the manner in which the State had been torn to pieces, without regard to all that had formerly been established, and the ungovernable ferocity which had been exhibited in the sack of the palace of Versailles and in the streets of Paris, no enduring Constitution, such as was then pretended to be made, could by any possibility be formed. He never forgot those days and nights of the fifth and sixth of October. For months afterwards they were seldom absent from his thoughts, and the impression he derived from them was constantly on his lips and falling from his pen. The triumph of the Parisians in dragging their unfortunate King to the capital, which they and their admirers regarded as a memorable epoch in the annals of Freedom, was in his opinion inexpressibly disgraceful. It was not in this manner that Liberty had been securely established in other countries. It was not in this manner that it could be securely established in France.

\* *Memorials and Correspondence of Fox*, vol. ii. p. 361.

When the Revolution began, his name was generally known on the Continent as that of one of the most earnest, eloquent and consistent friends of freedom. The part he had taken in opposing, during all his public life, the rash and unpopular acts of the Court, and particularly his resistance to the American war, in which France had herself interfered on the side of the colonists, being known wherever English politics were discussed, most of the distinguished foreigners who visited England were proud to be introduced to him, and were generally invited to Beaconsfield, of which the hospitality was dispensed with so liberal a hand. Among others, at the beginning of the year 1785, Mirabeau, who was then for his brief hour acting so boisterous and so brilliant a part, had slept under Burke's quiet roof, as the trees were stripped by the winter's frost of their leaves, and the crows' nests were seen in great profusion among the naked branches; and the Count had parted with professions of eternal obligation and devoted friendship: professions which, though confirmed with tears, were forgotten during the Revolution, when the unscrupulous and energetic orator delivered from the tribune a fierce philippic against the author of the *Reflections*, for having dared to question the wisdom and the utility of the legislative achievements of the National Assembly. But while so accessible to all, perhaps no persons were more kindly treated by Burke than the young and intelligent men who came to this country for information, and really showed by their modesty and ingenuousness that they deserved and appreciated his attentions.

One of these visitors was M. Dupont. He was a young Frenchman, of a frank and amiable disposition, a

great admirer of England and of English institutions, combined with the liberal notions which, before the Revolution, had made such progress among the cultivated classes of France, and earnestly desirous of seeing the government of his country reformed after that Anglican model which he so highly respected. Having recently partaken of Burke's hospitality, both in London and at Beaconsfield, he entertained a grateful remembrance of the kindness of his distinguished host, and was anxious to continue and improve an acquaintance which had been so auspiciously begun. When the Revolution broke out he wrote to Burke in enthusiastic terms, hoping, as so many good and respectable men then did, all things from the inauguration of this new era of freedom, and warmly requesting to know what the English statesman and philosopher, whom he revered, thought of it; and anticipating that Burke would feel as he felt, and send him his sincere congratulations on the joyful event that seemed pregnant with future happiness to many millions of human beings. Burke, he said, had first inspired him with an ardent love of freedom. To the master, then, he had recourse as the light which had hitherto been confined to England, began to illumine the Continent. Would Burke but answer his letters? He would keep him well supplied with authentic information about the glorious work of which he was the spectator and admirer.

Days passed on and M. Dupont's first letter remained unanswered. He wrote again, still more anxiously pressing for Burke's sentiments. The oracle was silent, and indeed, having very considerable misgivings, wished not to speak. Burke did not like to check enthusiasm. He did not like to write coldly or reservedly. He did not

like to enter into any controversy. Besides, as the darker features of the Revolution appeared, it seemed to him that if he gave unrestrained expression to his thoughts, he might involve his friend in danger, since an Englishman who wrote freely of the leading public men in France might render his correspondent obnoxious to their most deadly hostility. At length, late in October, as, after the strange scenes of the beginning of the month, affairs became more settled, he did commit his sentiments to paper, in a long letter to the lively and ingenuous young Frenchman. At the outset he candidly informed his friend why he had delayed answering his letter. As nothing was more indefinite than the word Liberty, he carefully stated his meaning of the term. The only Liberty he loved was social freedom, a liberty which was but another name for justice, ascertained by wise laws and preserved by well-constructed institutions. Did France possess, or was she in the way of acquiring, such freedom? He would not directly say that she did not possess it; he ardently wished her to obtain it; but he very distinctly implied his doubts whether she were taking the best means to secure it. The letter was indeed a severe criticism on all that had been done by the National Assembly and the populace of Paris. It went to show that, in his opinion, France had no government at all, that the monarchy had been destroyed, but nothing substituted in its place. While other people saw light and order, he saw nothing but darkness and chaos. He prophesied, as at the conclusion of the Reflections, that before the State could assume any final form, it would have to pass "through many varieties of untried being." One hint of advice he gave of universal application, which is in all times worthy of deep at-

tention, especially in days of political transmutation, when it seems so plausible to remark that all parties ought to be judged by their measures when in power, and not by the antecedents and characters of their leaders. "Never," he wrote, "wholly separate in your mind the merits of any political question from the men who are concerned in it. You will be told that if a measure is good, what have you to do with the character and views of those who bring it forward? But designing men never separate their plans from their interests, and if you assist them in their schemes, you will find the pretended good in the end thrown aside or perverted, and the interested object alone compassed, and that perhaps through your means. The power of bad men is no indifferent thing." To separate the means from the end, to do evil in the hope that good might ultimately result from it, he in a similar spirit strongly condemned. Moderation in such a crisis he held to be the first of virtues. Little was to be gained by splendid and perilous extremes. It was difficult to say how a young man with fortune, talent, and public spirit, should act in a time of such general change and excitement. If the storm became really so violent as to render ordinary prudence and moderation unavailing, perhaps it would be better for him to leave the field to others, and to retire into his study to qualify himself more perfectly to act when the commonwealth at length assumed a form in which an honest man could take a part with satisfaction and credit. The letter terminates with two or three characteristic observations on Burke's own position as a public man at this eventful period, before he put himself forward as the opponent of all violent and hasty innovations, and found his words listened to as the words of inspired wis-

dom throughout the length and breadth of the land, where his name had hitherto been mentioned only with opprobrium and reproach. "It seems somewhat singular," he observed, "that I whose opinions have so little weight in my own country, where I have some share in a public trust, should write as if it were possible they should affect one man with regard to affairs in which I have no concern." \*

The hesitation which Burke felt before writing this letter, returned as soon as it was concluded. Though written in October it was put away into his desk and not sent to M. Dupont until December. In the interval Burke's opinions on the great Revolution had assumed a new phase. In July we have seen that he began to doubt whether it was such a blessing as the rest of the world imagined, and that in October his suspicions ripened into a certainty; but still, up to the time when the epistle to M. Dupont was written, there were no indications of the English statesman being alarmed at the probable effects that the new doctrines, and the frenzied spirit in which they had been proclaimed and acted upon, might

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 102-121. A portion of this important letter was first published by Prior, and by him ascribed to M. Menonville. But there is very little reason to doubt that the editors of Burke's Correspondence were right in stating that it really was written to M. Dupont, the gentleman to whom the Reflections were subsequently addressed. That parts of this letter were sent to both M. Dupont and M. Menonville, as Mr. Prior in his last edition supposes, is very improbable. Burke was about the last man in the world to be at such a loss for matter, on a subject with which his mind was deeply occupied, as to repeat literally to one correspondent what he had written to another. Besides, it seems somewhat incredible that there should be two young Frenchmen writing to Burke at the same time, requesting the same advice, and in such exactly similar circumstances, that one answer would do for both, and one description apply to the other.

have on his own country. Not one word in that letter shows him at all anxious about the fate of English institutions. He writes as a disinterested stranger, criticizing the turbulent, ferocious, and insane movements in Paris, but in no respect apprehensive that those ungovernable passions would infect other nations. From the first the French Revolution was looked at with much interest by the English people, though the nature of it was very little understood, and it inspired little sympathy. No political party, or any section of any political party, considered itself much affected by what was passing on the Continent. But as weeks and months passed on, the sanguine and enthusiastic in England began to catch some of the contagious distemper which was driving their neighbours almost to frenzy. The scenes of the fifth and the sixth of October, which made Burke at once come to the conclusion that there was something radically wrong in the manner in which the Revolution was being carried out, and caused him to expect little good from its future manifestations, inspired others with sentiments of the most opposite description. They admired and applauded what he condemned and execrated. A society of extreme politicians had for some years been established for the purpose of circulating treatises on reform, at the cost of the members. Those productions, like most publications that are given away, were not of the most brilliant description, being such, as Burke afterwards satirically remarked, that few people ever thought of buying. The members, however, had a very great opinion of their own political importance, and under their high-sounding name of The Society for Constitutional Information, voted an Address to the National Assembly, loudly approving of

what had been done in the great work of the Revolution.

The Revolution Society was a much more influential club. It had been grafted on the old Bill of Rights Society, which in the days of Wilkes and the Middlesex elections had become the object of Burke's displeasure, from the frequent slurs it cast on the moderate principles of Lord Rockingham and his Whig party, and the sanction it gave to the more extreme Liberal dogmas, including triennial parliaments, vote by ballot, and the compulsory obligation of Members to obey the instructions of their constituents, which Burke had ever strongly discountenanced. The Revolution Society, the offspring of the old Association, had, with others, become the rallying ground of the Unitarian Dissenters; but politics more than religion in this season of change and fermentation were the leading and attractive features of the institution. On the fourth of November, the anniversary of the landing of King William and the commencement of the English Revolution of 1688, Dr. Price preached a sermon to the members of the club, in the chapel of the Old Jewry. The sermon, as a composition, had considerable merit; but it was in the enthusiastic vein which divines generally assume when they write or speak on political affairs, and no words were strong enough to express the preacher's admiration of the French Revolution, and the boundless hope he entertained of ultimate good to France and to the world which such an event would certainly realize. England would be ashamed of her freedom, which in comparison was insignificant and almost nominal. Even the great event of 1688, which the congregation met to celebrate, became on the retrospect from such a stupendous achievement a very small



affair; and in comparison with the revolutionists of France, the Whigs of William's reign, who were so proud of their glorious triumph, were merely children. This was the staple of Dr. Price's discourse. It powerfully affected his hearers, who shared his sentiments. From the meeting-house they, as the custom was, adjourned to the London Tavern to spend the rest of their holiday socially and cheerfully. The sermon in the morning and the French Revolution were naturally the great themes of conversation; and Dr. Price himself moved a resolution congratulating the National Assembly, in the name of the Revolution Society, on the noble edifice of freedom which they were erecting by their patriotic labours, and which was of course to overshadow the world, and shame despotism from off the face of the earth. Pitt's kinsman, the Earl of Stanhope, whose bold and uncompromising views, bordering on republicanism, surprised and shocked many of his aristocratic contemporaries, was the appropriate medium through which the resolution was communicated to the National Assembly. The French legislators were highly delighted: they considered the Address of the Revolution Society as the deliberate testimony of the whole English people in favour of all that they had done, and all that they were then doing; and had the King, the two Houses of Parliament, and the executive Government, all officially sent their congratulations, they could not have been more eloquently and proudly acknowledged by the National Assembly than was this Address of a not very eminent club. Dr. Price and his friends were of course highly delighted. The proceedings of the two clubs, Dr. Price's sermon, their addresses, the replies to those addresses, and several other documents,

were published, and extensively circulated. They became matter for several paragraphs in the newspapers. All the Dissenting interests appeared to indorse the sentiments so emphatically expressed. Liberal politicians applauded. The extreme Reformers were enthusiastically exultant. Great events it seemed were preparing in England as well as in France; and theories and measures, which had long been stigmatized as the impracticable dreams of reckless visionaries, might, under the auspicious influence of the spirit that was pervading France, be forced through the English Parliament.

While the letter which Burke had written to M. Dupont still remained in his desk at Beaconsfield, he received another communication from his eager correspondent, requesting to know why he continued silent, and particularly pointing out the addresses of the Society for Constitutional Information and the Revolution Society as proofs of the sentiments of the English people regarding the Revolution in France, and intimating the young Frenchman's belief that Burke participated in the same favourable sentiments.\*

Burke was never in a less approving mood. His opinions on the French Revolution were now firmly settled; and even had he been ever so much inclined to look favourably on what was passing abroad, it by no means followed that he would look with equal favour on the proceedings of the two English clubs which had been so forward in sending their congratulations on those transactions. Bad or good, he considered the Revolution, as long as it was confined to France, as the affair of Frenchmen and not of Englishmen. The interposition of other powers in our own internal con-

\* See Preface to the *Reflections on the French Revolution*.

cerns he always regarded with the deepest jealousy. Half of the dread with which from the first he had beheld the approach of the American war, arose from the conviction that it could not continue long without other nations taking advantage of it, and assisting the insurgents to dismember the British empire. Much of his zeal against the unjust and barbarous penal code, was inspired by the desire to remove all grievances from the mind of the Catholics, in order that all their affections might be turned homewards, and that they should have no divided allegiance. The worst of all evils, in his opinion, was the interference of foreigners in the domestic affairs of any state. Whatever complaints the English might have, he ever wished them to look for redress to their own Government; and could not bear the thought of any portion of his countrymen looking with approving eyes on another Executive rather than on their own, and opening a correspondence with a foreign power without the express permission of the Administration under which they lived. Nothing went more to produce the final rupture of his friendship with Fox, than his belief that the Opposition leader had sent a private agent to St. Petersburg to thwart the regular diplomatic agent of the English Government. A Society of Englishmen congratulating Frenchmen on a more glorious establishment of freedom than they possessed at home, and covertly reflecting on the old Constitution which had hitherto been their pride and boast, was to him preposterous and portentous.

At the same time he believed that the blessing which France vaunted so loudly was no blessing at all. He believed that this model constitution, which she boasted of having struck out at heat, was a most absurd system

of government, and that it could never last. He believed that the abstract principles the French legislators had proclaimed as the rights of man, which were to regenerate all societies, and introduce a new era of political science, were, standing alone, ridiculous, pedantic, and childish; and that so far from the authors of them being fit to be placed in the same ranks as the Solons and the Lycurguses of antiquity, they deserved to be whipped as presumptuous schoolboys, who thought themselves worthy of being lawgivers for the universe when they had yet to learn even the alphabet of all real statesmanship.

Still there was no concealing the fact that many Englishmen, and some of them of no mean authority, as divines, philosophers, and politicians, had become the professed admirers of the new French Constitution, and the doctrines of universal application which had been enunciated by the French Legislature and the French clubs. The passion was spreading, and might continue to spread. What might it not produce? But yesterday, and the time-honoured French Monarchy, however secretly undermined, had stood proudly confident that it never could be shaken; and yet it had fallen to the ground, and France was strewn with its ruins. Was it quite impossible that similar events might not occur in England? The agitators were busy. The movement, though not then formidable, was gathering strength. As yet there was no fear nor alarm among the quiet and contented portion of the community; but something might be done to awaken them to vigilance; something might be done to show what this Revolution which was so enthusiastically praised really was, and to cherish that affection for English institutions which had up to that time been the glory of all patriots, but which in the

season of novelty and change were so unworthily depreciated.

Burke at last, on sending off his letter to M. Dupont, determined to enter more largely into the subject. None was so important; none seemed so much to occupy the minds of all the thinking, and even all the unthinking, classes of both England and the Continent. A word spoken at the right time might have an irresistible effect. His reputation would secure attention for anything he might write. His command of illustration and force of expression could not but produce an effect very different from that of Dr. Price and the wordy declaimers in favour of abstract freedom, who in the extravagance of their zeal for the new doctrines, overlooked all the circumstances which demanded the gravest consideration of the prudent statesman.

Having come to a resolution, he at once set about his task. Before the year 1789 ended, the first sheets of the *Reflections on the French Revolution* were written. They were addressed to the same young Frenchman who had first set his mind to work on the vast subject; and the epistolary style of the private letter was preserved, giving the author a full opportunity for indulging in all the luxuriant beauties of disquisition and amplification in which his genius loved to revel.

While so busily employed, and with his matter growing upon him day by day, as wit, eloquence, and sarcasm, in all their rich profusion flowed from his pen, and while his son, Richard Burke, watched the progress of the work with a delight and sympathy which the careworn father could alone thoroughly appreciate, he received from his friend and associate in the Indian prosecution, Philip Francis, a printed scheme for a general bank in France,

on which he was asked to give an opinion. Like him, Francis too was engaged in attentively watching the progress of the Revolution; but unlike him, Francis, as might naturally have been expected from his bold, unhesitating, and impatient temperament, saw nothing to rebuke the ardour of his dreams for a free and regenerated France. He was all confidence, all exultation, hoping all things, believing all things from the new-born French democracy. The scheme for the bank Burke totally disapproved. It was one of those propositions for a paper currency, representing, as he told Francis, not cash but the want of cash, which could be no solid foundation for mercantile credit. Richard had read over the paper with him, and Burke was careful to add that his son disliked it even more than he did himself; though Francis would very likely read that sentence of the letter with a self-sufficient grin, and mutter surlily to himself, "Who asked for Richard's opinion?"\*

But in those writings on the French Revolution, the father and the son were jointly associated. Richard was now a man, intelligent, educated, matured; and his opinions on all matters Burke looked for, and received with the utmost deference. Page after page, as it was thrown off, was carefully read and revised by Richard, who even occasionally altered a sentence or inserted one of his own, as he thought the manuscript might be improved. Few great authors, however much attached to their sons, would wish them to interfere with their written compositions; but, considering Richard to possess literary and political abilities not inferior to his own, Burke was content and proud to see touches of his son's hand in his own cherished masterpieces, which he

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 121.

was himself never tired of correcting, revising, and altering, before giving them to the world. By constant study of his father's works, and constant communication with him on all political and literary subjects, Richard had caught much of Burke's style, and could occasionally write with much of his father's point and energy. Few passages in the *Reflections* have been more admired than the sketch of the literary men in France; it was not until Richard was in his grave that the father added, in a new edition of the work, a short note indicating the part which his son had inserted, and which reads as characteristic of Burke himself as any paragraph that ever fell from his pen. This unpretending note at the bottom of the page speaks with all a broken-hearted father's anguish, and was doubtless written with the tears blinding the eyes and wetting the paper.\*

Even at this time, when his mind was so actively employed on French affairs, he had a private affliction, which, though not so great as he was subsequently to experience, deeply affected one whose heart was so warm, and his family attachments so deeply rooted. His sister, Mrs. French, died. Burke's political labours had left him little opportunity for maintaining much personal communication with her; but they corresponded occasionally, and though the letters have not been preserved, their love for each other remained undiminished. She too had had her troubles. Some unsuccessful building speculations had grievously reduced her husband's fortune, and the closing portion of her life was not free

\* The words are: "This (down to the end of the first sentence in the next paragraph) and some other parts here and there, were inserted, on his reading the manuscript, by my lost son."—*Reflections on the French Revolution*.

from embarrassment and sorrow. An only child, a daughter, soon afterwards came to reside with the family at Beaconsfield, and, while that happy household still continued to exist, grew to be regarded as one of the most prominent of its members. Burke was much pleased with his niece; and she, looking at first with some degree of awe and veneration upon her uncle, shared his rambles over his fields, and affectionately attended Mrs. Burke during her fits of lameness, which unfortunately, as she advanced in life, became frequent and painful.

Burke's grief at his sister's death did not interrupt his new labour. His mind was too deeply engrossed, his conviction of the magnitude of the interests at stake too powerful, to permit a private sorrow to interfere with what he began to consider a grave public duty. Parliament did not meet until the twenty-first of January of the new and momentous year 1790; he could therefore devote himself more exclusively to the composition of his *Reflections*. He took a house for the session in Gerard Street, which is associated with his early literary career and hard struggles; and in town at the beginning of the session, as at Beaconsfield during the recent Christmas, the work was pushed rapidly on. With the exception of the Articles of Charge against Hastings, and some elaborate Indian Reports, which, however valuable, could scarcely be regarded as literary compositions, he had for a long period written almost nothing. The few speeches he had sent through the press, the Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol, in 1777, and the Remonstrance to the King, in 1784, can scarcely be supposed to have employed his pen for more than a few days at a time, extending over an interval of twenty years. To find himself, almost unconsciously, thrown



into the composition of an elaborate work on a subject of the greatest general interest, was an unexpected pleasure. It roused all his old literary spirit. It came as a relief from those dreary political vexations which seemed endless and objectless. The wisdom and the observation of many years were poured prodigally forth in this single volume; his imagination and his eloquence ran riot with the new sensation of freedom which they at length experienced. As he wrote on, the mere party politics of the day lost the importance with which he had generally regarded them; and he perhaps looked on the meeting of Parliament this season with less interest than on any former occasion. It was known in his own circle that he was not one of the admirers of the Revolution; with Windham and Francis he conversed long and anxiously, Windham listening to the avowal of his opinions with a respectful assent, Francis with an impatience which he cared not to conceal. But Fox and Burke had never met during the recess; nor had they taken any means to ascertain each other's ideas on events with which they might think themselves not immediately concerned. In town Burke was, however, told that Fox was one of the most enthusiastic in favour of the new French freedom; but it is remarkable that the two friends never exchanged opinions on the subject until they made public and opposite declarations on the floor of the House of Commons.

On the first day of the session the supporters of the Government alone spoke. Nothing was said about the French Revolution except a few words from the mover of the Address, who congratulated his hearers on the spectacle of quiet and order which England exhibited, in contrast to what was passing on the Conti-

ment. The only measure which Pitt was called upon to defend and explain, was an Order in Council prohibiting the exportation of corn. This he did in a very few words; and the Address was voted unanimously, without the Opposition, so far as speaking was concerned, giving any indications of their existence. The month of February came. Everything seemed as harmonious and pacific as when the session began. But on the fifth, the Army Estimates were brought forward, and some objections were raised to their increase. They were defended by Pitt; he called up Fox. What was the use, he demanded, of increasing our army? Whom had we now to fear? What was occurring in France must make her a better neighbour. It was true that, so far as the interests of the Constitution were affected, he had less jealousy than ever of the increase of the army. "The example of France," said Fox, "has proved that former imputations on armies were unfounded calumnies. It is now universally known throughout Europe that a man by becoming a soldier has not ceased to be a citizen."\*

Colonel Phipps, as a military man, objected to Fox's praise of the French army for its disobedience. Fox in return was defended by Lord Fielding. But so little was Burke aware that the French Revolution would be introduced into the discussion on the Army Estimates, and so little was he eager to bring the subject forward himself, that he was not even present during the debate. He was therefore perfectly correct in asserting afterwards, that he was not the first to make the French Revolution a topic of debate in the House of Commons.†

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxviii. p. 330.

† Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.

As he was not the first to begin the discussion, neither was he the first to continue it. Fox's speech was reported in the newspapers, and being generally talked about, of course came to Burke's ears. The praise of the French soldiery for military disobedience was especially distasteful to him: nothing had rendered the King more helpless in the midst of the popular tumults; nothing had tended so much to encourage the lawless Parisians in their violent outrages against order, decency, and life; nothing, if applauded abroad, was so easily imitated at home, and more calculated to render all government precarious and the best institutions insecure. With such a principle boldly proclaimed by the authority of great statesmen, it was useless to talk of laws and constitutions. They could only exist under the sufferance of the soldiers, who might in a moment destroy what they were in arms to defend. These were Burke's deliberate convictions; but, though Fox's declarations caused him much uneasiness, he still was decidedly averse to showing to the world a serious difference of opinion with his friend.

On the ninth of February, the Report on the Army Estimates was brought up. The subject was most unexpectedly and unintentionally revived. Sir Grey Cowper, whose long experience at the Board of Treasury naturally rendered him critical and captious, wished for more explanations on the details of the proposed expenditure. This produced a debate. The Estimates were defended by the new Secretary of State, William Windham Grenville, who reminded Fox of the alarming prophecies he had made three years ago, in the discussions on the French Commercial Treaty, respecting the increase of French power, and how signally they had been falsified by recent events. Always ready to come

forward when attacked, Fox rose to answer Grenville. He admitted that he had been mistaken, and said that he was not ashamed of his want of political foresight. Any one who in any European capital should have prophesied what had just occurred, would have been looked upon as a maniac. France would now be a better neighbour. It was useless to increase estimates to meet a danger which had in a great degree ceased to exist. The anarchy and confusion incidental to such a revolution must necessarily curtail her power, and render her less formidable to other states. Pitt next spoke. Though he of course defended the Estimates, on what was taking place in France he avowed opinions very similar to those of Fox. He was in favour of the Revolution. It would ultimately result in good order and good government, cause France to stand forth as one of the most brilliant of European powers, and make her approximate to those blessings of political freedom which Englishmen regarded as their birthright.\*

Fox had spoken twice about the Revolution; Pitt, as the leading Minister of the Crown, had even expressed his sentiments; but Burke, as yet, had not publicly given utterance to a single word.

He stood up as soon as Pitt had concluded. After alluding to the arguments of that Minister and Grenville about the Estimates, he declared that, at the time it did not appear to him England had reason to fear anything from any Continental power. Her great rival, France, who had hitherto been always her first consideration, had become politically extinct. She had lost everything, even to her name. Still a republic might be as dangerous as a monarchy; it was the strength of France, and not

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxviii. p. 351.

her form of government, that ought to be carefully watched. Her example had always powerfully affected this country. In the days of Louis XIV., her painted and gilded tyranny fascinated our sovereigns, Charles II. and James II.; and all patriotic Englishmen had to resist the inclinations of their kings to establish a similar government. The evil was changed in France; but still there was an evil there. The danger before was from an absolute monarchy: it arose now from an unbridled democracy. This was the greater evil of the two, because while the despotism only flattered the pride of kings, the democracy threw out the strongest allurements to the pride of the people. He was sorry that Mr. Fox had praised the conduct of the army; but it arose from his zeal for Liberty, that best of all causes. It gave him inexpressible pain, to differ from his friend, in whom he had the most unbounded confidence, whose understanding was far superior to his own, who was mild, benignant, placable, disinterested, without one drop of gall in his constitution. The House would, however, see his anxiety to keep the French distemper from England, by his coming forward to oppose one or two expressions of his best friend. "I am," said Burke, and the warning was surely sufficiently explicit, "so strongly opposed to any the least tendency towards the means of introducing a democracy like that of France, as well as to the end itself, that, much as it would afflict me if such a thing should be attempted, and that any friend of mine should concur in such measures (I am very far from believing they could), I shall abandon my best friends and join with my worst enemies to oppose either the means or the end."\*

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxviii. p. 356.

teresting and memorable speech by a comparison between the Revolution then going on in France and the Revolution effected by the English people in 1688. He showed that, contrary to what had been asserted, the two movements differed in almost every respect. Here, the people were on the defensive; there, they were aggressive. Here, a constitutional monarch attempted to acquire despotic power: there, an arbitrary monarch himself offered to limit his authority. Here, the Revolution preserved all the established institutions which had existed from time immemorial; there, every institution by which such a country as France was ever known, had been, or was then in the course of being, violently swept away.

The speech operated powerfully on the minds of all who were then present. It was the first open manifestation against the new opinions which had been made. However extraordinary had been some of the proceedings of the French revolutionists, however shocking some of the crimes that had been committed, still Englishmen, as a body, had, without much thought or reflection, felt themselves bound to applaud the efforts their gallant neighbours made to obtain a free constitution. The great political leaders had, as a matter of course, taken that side. As we have seen, even Pitt, usually so reserved, had not hesitated to avow his sentiments to be in accordance with such very natural prepossessions. But Burke's speech marked a new era in opinion. It was seen that something was to be said on the other side, and that something worthy of the deepest consideration. His friends around him, not wishing to be thought to acquiesce in any censure on their leader, remained silent. But as sentence after sentence fell from Burke's lips, containing indisputable truth ex-

pressed in the most eloquent language, the majority of the House were loud in their applause. The old Conservative loyalty of English gentlemen awakened; and both Pitt and Fox, who as party leaders stood on such high ground, appeared suddenly less elevated than the man who, after having been so long sneered at and ridiculed, expressed with lofty fervour his own convictions on the great events which had begun, and which that generation was not to see brought to a close. The French Revolution might be a curse or might be a blessing; but it was vaguely felt then, and all men will acknowledge now, those who dislike the course Burke took, as well as those who most respect his memory, that he was right in saying, even at so early a period, the great political convulsion was not like a mere English Revolution such as had been carried out under the auspices of William of Orange. Worse or better, it was something much more serious, much more awful. From darkness and chaos a spirit had broken forth, that through many troubled years and the most contrary political vicissitudes was not to be laid at rest. Whatever might be the port to which the French pilots were wittingly or unwittingly steering, it was certainly not to a mild, moderate, English constitutional monarchy.

After Burke's speech, Fox again rose, apparently much agitated. It was with a concern inexpressible, he said, that he found himself obliged to say a few words in answer to an effort which, with some remarks and arguments excepted, he regarded as one of the most brilliant flights of oratory he had ever heard. "Such," he afterwards observed, "is my sense of the judgment of my right honourable friend, such my knowledge of his principles, such the value which I set upon them, and

such the estimation in which I hold his friendship, that if all the political information I have learned from books, all which I have gained from science, and all which any knowledge of the world and its affairs has taught me, were put into one scale, and the improvement which I have derived from my right honourable friend's instruction and conversations were placed in the other, I should be at a loss to decide to which to give the preference. I have learnt more from my right honourable friend than from all the men with whom I ever conversed." \* He still entertained the opinion he had expressed with regard to the French army; but he was no friend to an absolute democracy; all absolute governments, monarchical, aristocratic, democratical, being in his opinion bad. However Mr. Burke and he might differ in the application of principles, they could never differ on the principles themselves. Burke said a few words in return, quite as conciliatory, and again warmly in praise of Fox..

Here the subject might have ended, equally to the satisfaction of the two friends and without the slightest immediate risk of real dissension. But Sheridan, who was evidently throughout all this period the malignant spirit bent on producing disunion, interfered in the debate. His speech was a violent philippic against despotism in general, and the late French despotism in particular; and he plainly accused Burke of being, with the best intentions, the friend of arbitrary governments and the foe of all Liberal institutions. He defended the National Assembly. He apologized for the atrocities of the Parisian populace. He panegyricized the rights of man. Fox had professed to

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxviii. p. 364.



agree with Burke in most of his arguments, and to dissent only from some of his conclusions. But Sheridan declared that he disagreed with Burke in every respect; he differed with him in all that he had said about the French Revolution, and in all that he had said about the English Revolution. It was impossible at such a time to have made a speech more offensive to a man of Burke's proud and sensitive disposition, or one more likely to promote discord in the party, than the vehement and inflammatory harangue which Sheridan delivered.\*

Burke appears to have understood the motive of this strange attack. For the future, he said in reply, Sheridan and he were separated in politics. But even in the last moments of departing friendship, he certainly did not expect to be treated with such want of candour and unfairness, as to be held up as the advocate of despotism, in order that at his expense his accuser might gain a little fleeting popularity and catch the applause of clubs. For this a friend had been sacrificed; but perhaps the acquisition would in the end be found scarcely worth the price.

All that Burke had endured from Sheridan for years, and the consciousness of the insidious part he was then playing, were concentrated in the remarks he at length uttered. Between the two orators there never could have been much real cordiality. Their nominal friendship was henceforth dissolved for ever. But the bosom of the wit and dramatist was to the last torn with jealousy of his much greater countryman; and he never could admit his immense inferiority in genius and character to the great statesman and philosopher, whom,

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxviii. p. 370.

after having once humbly sought his support and countenance, he gradually grew to depreciate and envy.

If the applause of those who had hitherto been his enemies could reconcile Burke to Sheridan's demonstration of hostility, he had ample reason for satisfaction. One Member after another commended his speech, and declared their concurrence with his sentiments. Pitt, whom Sheridan had invidiously complimented for taking a much more Liberal view of what was passing abroad than Burke, disclaimed any title to such praise, declared his agreement with Burke in every respect, and extolled him as deserving the gratitude of his countrymen and of posterity for the manner in which he had come forward in defence of the Constitution. Pitt evidently saw, as Burke was speaking, the course which events would take. The Minister resolved to follow the lead of the political philosopher; and he was doubtless all the more ready to do so, because it seemed probable that some of the chiefs of the Opposition would take another course, and that Burke and his friends, who had so long proceeded on their political journey together, would at length part company and go in opposite directions.

Attempts, it has been said, were immediately made to heal the schism in the Whig ranks, by bringing Burke and Sheridan together one night at the Duke of Portland's, where, in the presence of their political friends, the two orators debated the matter with remarkable ability on both sides until three o'clock the next morning, and then separated as much opposed as ever.\* To those who know Burke's character, this statement is not very credible. After what had passed between them, it is very unlikely that he would condescend to argue the question over with

\* Prior, p. 301.

Sheridan. He looked upon him with a feeling somewhat akin to contempt; and, particularly with regard to what he said on this very occasion, wrote slightly of him, as knowing nothing at all on the subject.\*

The alarm among the members of the party was indeed great. But it was not the mere quarrel between Burke and Sheridan that was dreaded, but the anticipated rupture with Fox, which had hitherto been avoided, but which in the progress of events did not seem improbable. The debate was for several days the subject of general conversation. The clubs were in a ferment. The newspapers were full of letters and comments; and as the Opposition organs of opinion were not yet unfriendly to Burke, his conduct was in general judged more favourably than that of Sheridan. Unfortunately the reports of the debate were far from correct. It was seldom that Burke's speeches were even given with the same care as those of Fox; and on this occasion in particular, Burke found that what he had said was very much misrepresented. Being busy with his *Reflections*, he had no time to write out a detailed report of the whole, nor, as he hoped shortly to have his more elaborate work ready, was it necessary; but wishing that the general tenour of his remarks should be clearly understood, he drew up hurriedly a short abstract of this speech on the Army Estimates, and published it in a small pamphlet. It sold rapidly, and was read eagerly. The popularity it acquired only gave him a foretaste of the reception he confidently anticipated for his greater

\* See the conclusion of his printed abstract of the debate, in which Burke, alluding to Sheridan's attack, says:—"Whether Mr. Burke did libel the National Assembly or not must be left to the judgment of those who are acquainted with the subject."

work, of which he was almost unconsciously extending the scope and tendency, as his mind worked on the vast materials for speculation and reflection the strange Revolution daily afforded.

Every day he saw more clearly the importance of the task he had undertaken. Every day, as his disapproval of what was going on in France became more generally known, letters flowed in upon him from one correspondent or another, expressing surprise, asking for explanations, and, in some instances, strongly opposing the view he was supposed to have taken in favour of despotism and against popular freedom.

One of these correspondents was a retired merchant of the name of Mercer. An Irishman by birth, energetic, enterprising, industrious, persevering, he had made in India a large fortune, which he retired to his native country to enjoy. He was proud of his wealth; he was proud of the manner in which he had acquired it. Honest, sturdy, sagacious, though an Irishman, he might be considered no bad representative of the aspiring class of Englishmen who now pride themselves on being considered Lancashire men, and have formed for themselves a new and characteristic school of politicians. His favoured theme was Independence, which, in some rugged verses he had engraven on gold plates, that he hung up in his ship's cabin and afterwards suspended in his dining-room, he declared to be, next to life and an immortal soul, the best gift of God.\* At Madras he had become acquainted with William Burke, and on returning to England, through the introduction of this beloved friend, sought Burke's acquaintance. Mercer was a character, and one of those

\* Prior, p. 305.

characters that Burke loved to study. They agreed very well together. The plain merchant had much information on India and trade to communicate, and the possessor of such knowledge was to Burke always welcome. Mercer, in his turn, regarded Burke as the most brilliant champion of Liberal politics; and, from their many conversations, did not find reason for suspecting that there were lengths to which his great countryman, of whose friendship he was proud, was not prepared to go. On reading in the newspapers what Burke had said in the debate on the Army Estimates, Mercer was taken by surprise. To him it seemed impossible that any wise and good man, and especially any lover of liberty, could entertain doubts respecting the beneficial tendency of the French Revolution. Burke was evidently labouring under some strange illusion. Mercer took up his pen and wrote a long letter, assuring him that he was quite wrong, and attempting by all the arguments he could find to bring him into a better state of mind.

Burke wrote him a long reply. Both letters have been published, and both are exquisitely characteristic of the two men. Mercer's rude dogmatism, his unhesitating confidence that his opinion is correct, and his profound conviction that his arguments are unanswerable, appear admirably in contrast with Burke's polite deference, calm reasoning, and not less conscious superiority. Mercer was not a man to call out the orator's vehemence. He is by implication given very clearly to understand that, though his general ideas may be perfectly right, his natural understanding very excellent, and the means he may have taken to improve himself and acquire a large fortune extremely praiseworthy,

yet that during his laborious life all human knowledge had not come under his consideration, and that, with all his virtues and all his success in the world, he was not qualified to predict with certainty the course of great revolutions, and to sit in judgment and decide, without appeal, on the good or evil of all political institutions.\* Men of Mercer's stamp very frequently need being told this truth; but as human nature in general is constituted, and their nature in particular, it is nearly always told them in vain.

The scholarly, eloquent, and accomplished Philip Francis, and the unpolished Captain Mercer, look at first sight widely different in character. Yet between them there was an analogical likeness. Both were bold, decided, sanguine, self-complacent, overweeningly confident in the soundness of their own opinions, and contemptuously indifferent to all who dissented from their views. They were both men who, believing that somebody must be always right and somebody always wrong, had the gratifying conviction that they were themselves always right, and everybody else, who did not agree with them, always wrong.

The composition of the Reflections, when Burke first spoke about the Revolution in the House of Commons, was so far advanced that the earlier portions of it, extending beyond the splendid lamentation over the sufferings of Marie Antoinette, were set up in type. Since Francis and he had become intimate, it had been Burke's custom to show his friend anything he might happen to be preparing for the press, and receive the benefit of his advice. This Francis was admirably qualified to give. Even those who are sceptical as to

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 141.

his being the author of Junius, must admit that he was a man of high literary attainments, and knew the English language well. Whether Burke, in the many years of their confidential intercourse, ever suspected Francis of being the great anonymous satirist, who had in former days excited both his admiration and his censure, is doubtful; but if he did, it is certain that he kept his suspicions to himself.

At this time he gave to Francis the first sheets of *The Reflections* for the benefit of his revision. On returning home late one night in the middle of February from Carlton House, of which the doors had only recently been thrown open to him, he found on his table a letter from his friend criticizing the proofs that he had had for his perusal, and seriously advising him to suppress the publication of the work altogether. The letter was most characteristic of the man. It is interesting to know that, even on so high a literary and political authority as Francis, the first impression made by Burke's celebrated *Reflections* on the French Revolution was one of entire disapproval. He assured Burke that as a composition it was very indifferently put together, and that the general tenor of the remarks was likely to be highly injurious to a statesman so eminent in Parliament and the country. He even thought that they were beneath Burke's dignity as a Privy Councillor. As for what was said of Marie Antoinette, Francis was not at all affected by it; it was, as he wrote in his blunt, cynical way, nothing more than pure foppery. Was Burke such a determined champion of beauty as to draw his sword in defence of any jade upon earth, if she were only handsome? Francis, as he said, was the only friend Burke had who would venture to tell him the truth plainly, and his candour was,

like that of most candid friends, extremely disagreeable. He wrote in conclusion: "The mischief you are going to do yourself is, to my apprehension, palpable. It is visible. It will be audible. I snuff it in the wind. I taste it already. I feel it in every sense; and so will you hereafter, when, I vow to God (a most elegant phrase), it will be no sort of consolation for me to reflect that I did everything in my power to prevent it. I wish you were at the devil for giving me all this trouble; and so farewell."\*

This letter excited Burke. Though it was past midnight, he felt himself unable to retire to rest until he had answered it. Long after the other members of the family were in bed, he remained at his desk, replying fully to the different objections Francis had raised. Respecting his manner, he observed, if there was really something so menacing and terrible in it, he must, old as he was, endeavour to correct it. "You certainly," he truly said, and as this very correspondence certainly showed, "do not always convey to me your opinions with the greatest tenderness and management; and yet I do not recollect, since I first had the pleasure of your acquaintance, that there has been a heat or a coolness, of a single day's duration, on my side, during that whole time." His natural style of writing he admitted to be careless; the looseness of the composition, of which Francis complained, was intentional; being addressed in the form of a private letter to a friend, he had no idea of arranging the materials in systematic order. The main objections to the piece were, however, of a much deeper nature. He was astonished that any one with the page before him could think that his only ground for dis-

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 128.



approving of the conduct of the Parisians to the Queen of France was her beauty. That beauty must be pretty well faded. He would not refrain from expressing his natural feelings at the spectacle of illustrious rank, splendid descent, and elegant accomplishments becoming the object of every kind of wrong, insult, and contumely. Whenever he thought of the contrast between the present situation of Marie Antoinette and that in which he beheld her when he visited France, the tears came into his eyes, and, as he wrote his impressions, wetted his paper. Every time he read his own description his tears again flowed. This Francis might, if he pleased, look upon as affectation and foppery, but, Burke solemnly added, "My friend, I tell you it is truth; and that it is true, and will be truth, when you and I are no more; and will exist as long as men with their natural feelings shall exist." After some more observations on his attacks on Dr. Price and Lord Shelburne, Burke, entirely exhausted, went to seek that repose which, at his time of life, nature so much required; and he left the letter, as became his habit, to be copied, sealed, and sent off by his son.

On reading this letter, and that of Francis to which it was a reply, Richard felt vexed and annoyed that his father, amid all his arduous labours, and with his increasing susceptibility, should be drawn into such a controversy. He enclosed Burke's letter in one of his own, seriously requesting Francis to let the correspondence cease. This letter beautifully depicts the affectionate care with which he watched over his father, how ready and anxious he was, as indeed others observed, to soothe his constitutional irritability,\* and how

\* Hardy.

high was the estimate he had formed of Burke's genius and character, at a time when, by the generality of the world, and even by those friends who were in daily intercourse with him, they were so little appreciated and so much misunderstood. It was not without reason that the aged father deplored the loss of a son who, amid the neglect and indifference of the world, and the slights and enmity of those who had been so long politically associated with him, had become his constant companion, his most confidential friend, his most reverential admirer, his most considerate consoler. "There is one thing," Richard wrote to Francis, "of which I must inform you. It is that my father's opinions are never hastily adopted, and that even those ideas which have often appeared to me only the effect of momentary heat or casual impression, I have afterwards found, beyond the possibility of doubt, to be the result of systematic meditation, perhaps of years; or else, if adopted on the spur of the occasion, yet formed upon the conclusions of long and philosophical experience, and supported by no trifling depth of thought. . . . Are you so little conversant with my father, or so enslaved by the cant of those who call themselves his friends, only to ensure themselves through him, as to feel no deference for his judgment, or to mistake the warmth of his manner for the heat of his mind? Do I not know my father at this time of day? I tell you, his folly is wiser than the wisdom of the common herd of able men." \* Some persons will think, on perusing such observations, that Richard Burke, led away by filial devotion, formed far too high an estimate of his father's understanding. There are others who may perhaps think that Richard really recognized more justly than

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 133.

most of his contemporaries, the real greatness of Burke's intellect, and the noble purposes by which his life was actuated; and that it was this sympathy, founded not on affectionate illusion, but on solid reason, that so closely attached the son to the father, and the father to the son.

From Francis as well as from Fox, Burke was then far divided in opinion on the Revolution. But whatever might be his declarations, they had not as yet influenced his political conduct in the House of Commons. At the beginning of March, Fox brought forward a question, on which Burke and he had hitherto been supposed to agree. It was a motion for the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, in accordance with the advice Burke had himself given his friend to conciliate the Dissenting interests, which, ever since the coalition with Lord North, had thrown their influence into the scale of the Court and supported Pitt's administration. As this Minister became the acknowledged leader of the Tory party, and was supported by the thick ranks of the country gentlemen, the Dissenters gradually cooled in their attachment to his Government, but without openly transferring their allegiance to his great rival on the Opposition benches. It was with reluctance and with distrust, that they were at last induced to place their cause in Fox's hands. A general election was however expected during the autumn, and they were desirous of making their influence felt. Having once become their advocate, it was not in Fox's nature to show any want of alacrity or zeal. On the second of March he brought forward his motion, and delivered in favour of it a speech of powerful reasoning and sound statesmanship. Apparently Burke ought to have supported Fox. He had always objected to

putting any restraint upon the consciences of men, and condemned the policy of making religious opinions the passport to civil offices. Whatever judgment may be formed on his views respecting the French Revolution, there is perhaps no act of his life so difficult to defend as his conduct under an apprehension of the agitation and excitement that prevailed among the Dissenters, in lending his eloquence and philosophy for once to the cause of intolerance. Hatred of Priestley and Price, for their loud exultation on the Revolution, had taken full possession of his being. He regarded them as apostles of sedition and anarchy, abetting from their pulpits all the unquiet spirits whom the great movement had called into active and vigorous life. Burke spoke after Pitt, and began with defending Fox, for being the champion of the Dissenters; he reminded the Minister that Lord Chatham had, in his day, also been their most eminent patron; and he particularly quoted a saying of the great Earl, in their defence against an Archbishop, that they sought for a spiritual creed and a spiritual liturgy, while the Church of England had a Calvinistic creed, a Popish liturgy, and an Arminian clergy. He also reminded Pitt, that his former colleague, Lord Shelburne, who had first raised him to eminence, succeeded to Lord Chatham as the protector of the Dissenters, and that yet neither under Chatham nor Shelburne had the safety of the Church been endangered. So far all promised well. Then followed a beautiful picture of the advantages of society in contradistinction to those of mere abstract rights, which he affirmed must annihilate society altogether. The great principle of toleration, which Fox had maintained to be universally applicable and to admit of no exception, Burke argued must also be limited according to circumstances. The circum-

stances of that time were most dangerous. The persons for whom relief was applied were disaffected citizens. He showed two printed catechisms written by Dissenters, one of which contained not a single religious precept, and the other was a continued invective against bishops and kings. After stating that this political catechism had been expressly approved at a large general meeting of those who did not conform to the Established Church, he also read a letter from a Dissenter who had found himself obliged to retire from another influential assembly of his co-religionists at Bolton, because they avowed principles so violent as to alarm all moderate men. A letter of Dr. Priestley, expressing his hopes that the Church of England would soon be blown up by the train of gunpowder which the doctor personally knew to be prepared for it, next figured on the scene; and Burke concluded his series of proofs of the alarming circumstances of the times, by reading an extract from Dr. Price's sermon, which had in the yet unpublished *Reflections* been made the object of the most severe animadversion and keenest sarcasm. Ten years before he would, he admitted, have voted for the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. The Test was bad, it was an abuse of the sacramental rite; it was an abuse of a rite too solemn for prostitution. But another Test might be substituted, and one which he had himself drawn up he had at that time in his pocket, and this he declared himself ready to produce, if the House thought fit to allow the previous question to be carried, instead of meeting the motion by a direct negative.\*

This Test was a simple one, being merely a declaration in the presence of God, that a religious establish-

\* Collected Speeches, vol iii. p. 472.

ment was not contrary to His law, or to the principles of the Christian religion; and that no attempts would be made by the person who took it, or by those over whom he could exercise any influence, to destroy the Church of England as by law established. Experience has shown that such a Test is of little value. It becomes a mere instrument to harass tender consciences, and render the individual discontented, without making the Church it was framed to protect in any respect more secure. Fox's motion was defeated by a large majority. This he might have expected. But he was surprised and hurt at Burke's speech. Still, acknowledging the great obligations he owed to him as a preceptor, he could not, he said, reconcile his precepts with the words he had heard that day fall from his lips. They had filled him with grief and shame.\*

The leading Dissenters were of course still more indignant. They had never been among Burke's admirers; they had never forgotten his conduct seventeen years before, on the petition for relief from subscribing the Thirty-nine Articles. But their former animosity was languid indeed in comparison with what it now became. Even his attainments and his genius were scoffed at. Fox's unqualified assertion of his obligations to his friend as his political instructor were ridiculed. Priestley and Price wrote to each other that, if Fox had really learnt from Burke more than from all the books he had ever read, he must have read very few books.†

Two days after this debate, Burke again appeared in antagonism to the majority of the Opposition. Of this however they could scarcely complain, since it was on the old ground of Parliamentary Reform, which had ever called forth his hostility. In answer to Flood, who

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxviii. p. 448

† Priestley's Life.

brought the question forward, Burke very truly asserted that the American war had really been popular, and would certainly not, through any efforts the people might have made, been prevented even by universal suffrage. His friend Windham, who on this subject had, much to the indignation of Fox, adopted the same views, instanced the Bristol election of 1780, when Burke had himself been defeated, as showing that consistent and strenuous opposition to that war had not secured to the most eminent of politicians the approbation and support of the popular constituencies.\*

Opposing most of his own party in the House of Commons, and at the same time busily engaged in composition during the few hours he could spend at home, Burke was also summoned to other duties which he was determined not to neglect. He had again to attend to the impeachment of Hastings, in Westminster Hall, though the trial had really become to every one but himself and Francis, a tedious and unprofitable labour. The length to which the proceedings had spun out was steadily acting in Hastings's favour. At first the people, full of prejudices against Nabobs, and horrified at the crimes which they supposed them to have committed in acquiring their enormous wealth, were ready to believe anything to his discredit. The great orations of Burke, Fox, and Sheridan, had stimulated these popular prejudices to the utmost; and it seemed impossible that a man accused of such great crimes, in so solemn and authoritative a manner, could escape conviction. But time had passed on. Other events of no common magnitude had rapidly succeeded each other. What the King's illness and the Regency discussions had begun, the French Revolution had consum-

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxviii. p. 466.

mated. People seemed in a new world, to have new thoughts, new passions ; and the impeachment began to be generally voted a bore.

The popular prejudices seemed to turn as unreasonably in favour of Hastings as they had once been unreasonably against him. During the recess, there had been two trials relating to Indian affairs, and in both juries had returned verdicts which, even in the opinion of Burke himself, were decidedly unfavourable to the cause of the prosecution.\* Mr. Perryman, the printer of the *Morning Herald*, had been cast in an action brought against him by Sir Elijah Impey for an article in the newspaper, asserting that it was through Mr. Pitt's influence over the House of Commons that the corrupt judge had escaped the punishment due to his crimes. On the very next day, Stockdale, the publisher of Logan's eloquent pamphlet in defence of Hastings, had also had a verdict returned in his favour ; and Erskine's brilliant defence, in which, though his own political friends had so earnestly supported the prosecution, he went beyond the usual limits of an advocate and vehemently arraigned the justice and policy of the impeachment, made a great impression on the public mind. Even Burke considered that something was necessary to be done, or that the business would have to be given up with great disgrace to all concerned in it, and particularly to himself. Mr. Anstruther continued the charge of bribery and corruption, which had been so elaborately opened during the preceding session, and other matters relating to the trial were gradually proceeded with ; but the prosecution seemed scarcely to advance ; day after day was wasted on taking the opinion of the judges on the reception of evidence ; and the field

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 127.



yet to be traversed by the Managers of the impeachment before Hastings could be heard in his defence, appeared absolutely boundless. In the May of this year, after having been engaged through nearly three sessions of Parliament, extending over as many years, their Lordships had sat in Westminster Hall sixty days on the impeachment; and it seemed almost a certainty that other three sessions, extending over other three years, and occupying sixty days more, would not bring the business to a conclusion. The Managers were besides deprived of much of their authority from a rumour which Hastings's friends took care most industriously to propagate, that the Commons were heartily sick of the matter, and that, if it came to a vote, would by a decided majority rid themselves of the work altogether.

Burke determined to try this question. On the eleventh of May, after having been engaged during the morning in Westminster Hall, he afterwards stood up in the House of Commons, and entered into a statement respecting the impeachment, and correcting certain misrepresentations. He admitted that the trial had occupied a long time; that justice ought to have been obtained in such a period; but he strenuously denied that the Managers of the impeachment were answerable for the delay. Was it their fault that Mr. Hastings insisted on every paper, however voluminous, being read out word for word from the beginning to the end? Was it their fault that he had refused every opportunity of clearing away a single imputation or refuting a single charge? Was it their fault that the reception of one portion of evidence after another was objected to; that the opinion of the judges was demanded on every detail; and that the trial was adjourned while their Lordships in

their own House spent hours and days in solemnly deliberating what was the proper method of proceeding? Undoubtedly Mr. Hastings had suffered hardships ; but he showed no particular anxiety to bring his hardships to an end. So little truth was there in the statement that three thousand pounds had been paid by the late Governor-General merely to the clerks of the India House for copying papers, Burke declared that he had himself personally made inquiries in Leadenhall-street, and found that every paper was copied for the defendant free of all expense. Mr. Hastings had alleged that his health was suffering, that he required the benefit of a foreign climate, and that he was prevented from enjoying the advantages due to all persons of his rank and station in society. Burke could not see the truth of these assertions. If the defendant made arrangements with his bail, there was nothing to prevent him from going abroad. A person on his trial could not generally be considered altogether in the same condition as other people ; but Mr. Hastings might be seen every day at balls, theatres, operas, and assemblies, just like the rest of the fashionable world. At this allusion, Major Scott and others shouted " Oh ! oh ! " But that outburst, remarked Burke, was not the cry of sensibility. It was surely competent in the Managers for the impeachment to show, in reply to what had been stated there and elsewhere, that Mr. Hastings was enjoying some of the comforts of life, and shared in its rational pleasures. He humbly added, that if the ease of his life were compared with that which Mr. Hastings led, it might be soon seen which of the two had more reason to complain of anxiety and toil. It was the defendant who really wished to gain time, in order that the House might become thoroughly

tired and sick of the business. To defeat these manœuvres, the orator concluded by moving two resolutions: the one, to bring the prosecution within manageable compass, by authorizing the Managers to insist only on such charges as they might consider necessary to obtain speedy and effectual justice; and the other, to give a deathblow to the hopes of the enemies of the impeachment, by solemnly declaring that they would persevere with the trial until judgment should be obtained.\*

Pitt considered the first resolution very proper, but the second scarcely necessary. He would not, however, he said, vote against either. Major Scott rose, not formally to oppose the resolutions, but to deny positively that Mr. Hastings had ever said he had paid three thousand pounds to the clerks in Leadenhall-street for copying papers. It was a hearsay statement made by one noble Lord, and repeated by another, but with it Mr. Hastings had nothing whatever to do. For once in his life, the Major declared, he had resolved to be on that evening a silent Member; he had even gone up into the gallery that he might keep this resolution; but the audacity of Burke's assertion had unwillingly compelled him to come down and open his lips. The Solicitor-General, without Pitt's support, divided the House on the resolution pledging the members to proceed with the trial. It was carried by a majority of seventeen; but the few who voted on each side showed clearly how little the great body of the popular representatives then cared either for the success or for the discontinuance of the prosecution. The majority was only composed of forty-eight votes; the minority, of thirty-one.†

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iv. p. 493.

† Parl. Hist., vol. xxviii. p. 794.

Major Scott having, in reluctant but stentorian tones peremptorily denied Burke's statement about the copying of the papers in the India House, could not rest satisfied with this denial. The House of Commons was, after all, not the Major's world. It was not the tribunal to which he cared to appeal. As a great but unappreciated journalist, Scott was always addressing the public through the press. His zeal for his patron continued as indefatigable as ever, and it is no reproach to him to say that, though Hastings's fortune was rapidly disappearing under the heavy expenditure he was called upon to meet, for his extraordinary zeal the Major continued to be well paid. He never made a speech in defence of Hastings without correctly copying it out, and sending it to the newspapers. The speeches of Burke, Fox, and Pitt, at this time, are far from being so perfectly reported as we might wish them to have been; but Scott took care that posterity should have every means afforded for judging of his parliamentary eloquence. Nor was he satisfied even with this careful attention to let the public know what he was doing. The speech which he had carefully corrected, he generally repeated in the form of a letter in the newspapers, with comments on his opponents, in a style which he could not, for the sake of parliamentary decorum, use in the House of Commons.

No sooner was the debate on Burke's resolutions reported in the different journals, than a long letter made its appearance in a paper called *The Diary or Woodfall's Register*, vehemently attacking Burke for the assertion about the money paid to the clerks of the India House, accusing him of descending to calumnious arts altogether below the dignity of a Privy Councillor, and of maliciously wasting time in Westminster Hall in order that

Hastings might be put to additional expense and inconvenience, and the trial prolonged until the next Parliament should meet. This exquisite production had affixed to it the signature of John Scott,—a signature with which all who looked into newspapers in that day were perfectly familiar, and of which most editors who wished to have their papers read had an absolute horror. The letter was only one of a long series which the author had been weekly and daily in the habit of writing against Burke, and which he had never condescended to notice, nor even peruse. It was in the tone of all the gallant Major's philippics, that is as disrespectful as it was possible to be. Scott had only one method of defending Hastings, and that was by scurrilously assailing his leading accuser. This was Scott's idea of literary and political controversy. That Burke was in any respect his superior, that he was a man of the noblest attainments and the highest genius, that his private life was as decorous as his political conduct had been consistent and straightforward, that he could have any other motive in prosecuting Hastings than the lowest malice, the Major never for one moment appears to have imagined. Nothing could be more contemptuous than Scott's manner of addressing the statesman and political philosopher, nothing coarser than the language of those daily revilings of one whom he sought as futilely as foolishly to degrade to his own level.

When this letter was published, containing such gross reflections on Burke, the rest of the Managers for the impeachment resolved to teach the Major that in the character of Hastings's champion he would not be allowed to go on from day to day libelling other people with impunity, and writing upon them in the newspapers slanderous attacks, which decency prevented him from

making in exactly the same style to their faces in the House of Commons.

General Burgoyne brought the matter forward as a breach of privilege. The Major defended himself by again attacking Burke. He had only, he said, followed precedents ; Burke had published no less than twelve speeches and pamphlets in his time ; and Scott classed his own choice effusions in the columns of the daily press, with Burke's *Thoughts on the Present Discontents*, and his speeches on American Taxation, Economical Reform, the Indian Bill, and the Nabob of Arcot's Debts. But the House was not satisfied with the Major's comparisons, though he came down fortified with all Burke's pamphlets in his hands as his justification. Even those who usually voted on the same side with him, had nothing to say in his defence. Pitt himself declared the letter to be a libel ; and though Major Scott again attacked Burke, as his only defensive resource, a scandalous libel it was solemnly voted. What punishment was the Major to receive ? Members had been expelled for libels ; others committed to the custody of the Serjeant-at-arms ; some reprimanded by the Speaker, as they were made humbly to kneel at the bar : the most lenient treatment was a public reprimand given to the offending representative in his place.

Burke disdained to enter into a defence of his own publications, from the charges made against them. He considered that a reprimand by the Speaker at the bar, was the fitting punishment for the Major to suffer ; and alluding to the denial that Scott so frequently made, of being any longer Hasting's agent, drew a singular picture of the relations of the two persons. If Scott were not the agent, who then, asked Burke, could he be ? He

must be Hastings himself. Their sexes, characters, and constitutions were confounded. When any Member took a walk to the India House, there Major Scott would be sure to be seen, busily copying papers and paying money for Mr. Hastings. When a petition from Hastings was presented to the House of Lords, it was the Major who stated that he had drawn it up. When Mr. Hastings exhibited articles of defence at the bar of the House of Commons, and Hastings's counsel expressed their dissatisfaction with them, the Major took all the responsibility upon himself, totally exculpating Hastings from having anything to do with their preparation. The real name of Mr. Hastings must be Legion. Everything was done by Scott and Co. Burke declared that though for his own part he completely despised the libels the Major had written against him, and that there was nothing in the beauty of their composition or the force of their arguments to render them at all alarming, still something ought to be done by the House to protect Managers appointed by themselves from slanders written for newspapers and signed with the names of their own Members.\*

The majority, under the command of the Minister, inclined to the side of leniency. But the gentlest punishment the offender could receive must have been sufficiently humiliating, had the Major been, what he mercifully was not, a person of real sensibility. During the preceding session, when he was so eager to see Burke disavowed and censured by a resolution of the House, he did not anticipate that in the session immediately following he would himself be voted a scandalous libeller, and in this capacity be publicly reprimanded in his place by the Speaker of the House of Commons. Such was

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxviii. p. 854.

the open and apparent shame he was obliged to endure; such the unfortunate catastrophe into which he was unexpectedly led, by his inveterate propensity for writing and paying heavily for publishing libels against Burke in the columns of the daily newspapers. This incident in some measure relieved the monotonous uniformity of the impeachment, and to Burke himself must have given a sensation of relief. A few more days were spent in Westminster Hall, before the termination of the session. The long detail of evidence on the corruption and bribery charge appeared endless, and wearied out all but those officially concerned. Some days there were not more than twenty Members of the House of Commons present, and the places assigned to mere holiday spectators were deserted. But just as in the second week of June Parliament was to be adjourned, in anticipation of the dissolution in the autumn, Charles Fox undertook to sum up the evidence on another of the charges, with which the Managers had chosen to proceed; and during the two days on which the leader of the Opposition spoke, the Hall looked as crowded as ever.\* Still the close of the trial seemed far off, and people had some reason for asking each other whether it would be concluded at all.

This summer, though so strongly pledged to persevere with the impeachment to the last, and so deeply engrossed with the affairs of the French Revolution, another object, and one which he never considered himself at liberty to neglect, was once more intruded on his attention, and of which he was never again to lose sight until his anxious eyes should be closed for ever to the good and evil of all political regulations.

\* Trial of Warren Hastings, published by Debrett, p. 62.



The unusual agitation of the Continent had not inspired the English Dissenters only with a desire to have all religious restrictions removed; it had encouraged the Roman Catholics of Ireland to persevere in their endeavours to obtain complete emancipation for themselves and for their country. Their cause had for years been gradually becoming more powerful. Associations and their Committees had held frequent meetings. Subscription-lists were opened, and found numerous contributors. But men who had so long been deprived of political privileges, had not at first that political experience which the exercise of such privileges can alone confer. They wished to lay their case before Parliament by petition, and before the public by the press. Knowing that Burke had been their old and constant friend, they came to a determination which was considered by the best judges singularly happy and judicious.\* They resolved to make Burke's son Richard, as a practising barrister, their professional adviser, and while requiring his services, and enclosing documents on which their petition and representation were to be framed, sent him to begin with a fee of fifty guineas. By the course they took, their claims were at once taken out of the hands of the mere agitator, and in such a season when there was so much alarm occupying the minds of moderate persons at the anticipation of change, the value of the choice could not be too highly estimated. They well knew that Richard was not likely to give them any advice on which he had not previously consulted Burke himself, and that in the cause both father and son would work together with the most zealous co-operation. In the letter containing the resolution to which the Irish gen-

\* See the remarks of Hardy in his *Life of Lord Charlemont*.

tlemen had come, they in the most handsome manner acknowledged the debt they owed to Burke, while asking for the services of young Richard. "The obligations," they wrote, "we owe his family, are strongly impressed on us all; and we wish to be indebted to the ability of a branch of it for laying the foundation of our emancipation, and to perpetuate to the son the gratitude we are so sensible we owe to the father."\*

The gentleman who called at Richard's chambers in Stone Buildings, Lincoln's Inn with this letter, finding he was out of town, sent it with other papers to Burke at Beaconsfield. He could not but be highly gratified. The cause of the Irish Catholics was especially his own. Long before French Revolutions, and their pedantic theories about the inalienable rights of man had been ever heard of, he had devoted himself, in the spirit of the statesman and philanthropist, to do away with the religious disabilities which had so cruelly harassed and degraded the Catholics of Ireland. On this subject his views never changed, nor could change. Accused at this season of deserting his old principles, to this principle, as applied to the Roman Catholics of Ireland, he continued to be attached. It was not in one day nor in one year that the disabilities could be removed. He was getting old. His earlier contemporaries were, one after the other, rapidly passing away from the scene. He might not live to see effected all that he so ardently desired. But that his son should take up the work he must leave unfinished, and carry out to a successful conclusion what he had many years before begun, awakened joy inexpressible in the father's heart. If glory was to be won in such an undertaking and such an achievement, it was far more pleasing to him that

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 154.

the glory should be given to Richard, rather than attributed to himself. He loved Ireland well; he wished Ireland to love his son. His fond hope that his native country might have to regard Richard as her emancipator was not the least dearly cherished of those bright parental visions which were so fatally extinguished in the son's premature grave.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

1790.

## PUBLICATION OF THE REFLECTIONS.

It is not without significance that the summer which witnessed Richard Burke's acceptance of the office offered to him, as the professional adviser of the Irish Roman Catholics, should also be that in which the last sheets of his father's *Reflections on the French Revolution* were thrown off from his pen. Both the eloquent warnings against sudden and violent changes in the state, and the abolition of penal laws which had been the intemperate work of other generations, were considered by Burke and his son as revolutionary antidotes. The *Reflections*, which had occupied so great a portion of his mind for nearly twelve months, was almost week by week expected to be ready. It had been for some time announced as on the eve of publication ; it had been the talk of both friends and enemies, some looking for it with anxiety, and all with impatience.\* But August came, and September came, and still the book lingered. Every day the author found something more to say. Every day, as crime after crime was committed, and the Government became more and more unsettled, his conviction was strengthened that his views on the Revolution were correct, and that the French system of liberty threatened to end in a despotism at once atrocious, bloody, and

\* See the Introduction to Mackintosh's *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*.

shameless. In France he saw anarchy and crime ; freedom, or any signs of establishing a good government, he could not behold.

His young friend, M. Dupont, came over to England during the autumn. As he, by earnestly calling for Burke's sentiments on the question, had first induced the statesman to sit down and write the work, the sheets were shown to him as they passed through the press, and he set about preparing a French translation, which was intended to be ready for publication at the same time as the English edition. The accomplished Frenchman read the eloquent pages with the deepest interest, in general approving of what Burke had written, but not hesitating to let him know when they occasionally differed in opinion. He was, in particular, dissatisfied with that most animated paragraph of the Reflections containing the sketch of Henry IV. He thought it much too severe ; and requested Burke to reconsider the sentence in which he states that this amiable French sovereign did not hesitate "to shed the blood of those who opposed him, often in the field, sometimes on the scaffold." This produced, in reply, a long and admirable letter from Burke, defending the expressions he had used, and entering more minutely into Henry of Navarre's character, which he subjected to the closest and most brilliant historical analysis. He wished this epistle to be read at the same time as the French translation, that Frenchmen, who were taught, even by the most sceptical of their philosophers and the most extreme of their revolutionists, to panegyrize immoderately Henry IV.'s memory, at the expense of the reputations of all his descendants, might know how vigilant and resolute was the king who was acknowledged to have been both great and good.\*

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 155.

Burke gave his correspondent permission either to print this letter in an appendix to his translation, or to keep it to himself, just as he pleased. Young Richard took it with him to town, but it was too late for the first French edition which was rapidly passing through the press. It was, however, added as an appendix to the second edition of M. Dupont's French translation, and also after the preface to the third. In a note the translator admitted the observations on Henry IV.'s public life to be just; but he also frankly stated that he could not assent to Burke's opinion about the great sovereign not having meant or desired to correct the vices of the State.\* Notwithstanding M. Dupont's diligence, it was not until the twenty-ninth of November that the French impression was in the hands of the Parisian public; and scarcely had it appeared, when a scandalous attempt was made to deprive him of the profits of his meritorious labour. An unscrupulous person, of official station, distributed the sheets, exactly as M. Dupont had translated them, among the different printing-houses of Paris, that another impression might be ready in twenty-four hours. But the authorized translation sold rapidly. The second and third editions, free from defects, which were frankly admitted in the preface, rapidly followed each other; and the translation became as fair a version of an English work, and of Burke's style of eloquence, as it was possible to produce in a foreign language.†

At the same time there was in circulation at Paris another letter, in which Burke was represented as directly addressing the French people. It pointed out to

\* See M. Dupont's translation of the *Reflections*, the first and second editions, p. 287.

† See preface to the second and third editions.

them four bases on which they were to establish their constitution, and conveyed much good advice to another people, in a tone which he certainly never would himself have assumed. Some dissatisfied royalist, anxious for a government after the English type, had modestly thought fit to personify Burke; and taking for a foundation the speech on the Army Estimates, which had also been translated into French, built upon it an epistolary superstructure of his own ideas as to what Burke would write. It was read by thousands, including epigrammatic editors and members of the National Assembly, who never doubted that it was altogether Burke's own composition, and made it the text of much elaborate commentary and fierce vituperation.\*

His reputation as the powerful antagonist of the French Revolution was, at the close of 1790, great over the whole Continent. Some persons admired his eloquence: the unhesitating believers in the Revolution were astonished at his audacity. The French people, with all their overweening confidence in themselves, have never been indifferent as to what the English thought of them, and the name of the great English statesman who had dared to denounce their glorious work as a sanguinary innovation was on every tongue.

In England, too, very different from what had been the circumstances in some previous years, the name of Edmund Burke had suddenly become greater and more powerful than it had ever been. The book was published on the first of November, and was found more than to realize all the expectations which had been formed. It was read everywhere. It was talked about

\* Lettre de M. Burke, membre du Parlement d'Angleterre, aux François, 1790.

by everybody. No political work on the events of the day ever equalled it in the interest it at once created, and the reputation it immediately acquired. "What do you think of Burke's book?" became a common form of salutation among political acquaintances, who had lately looked upon him as a wild enthusiast, whose vagaries they scarcely condescended to notice. The demand for the work was considered unprecedented by the trade. Nothing else was asked for; nothing else thought of. Edition followed edition. Thirty thousand copies were very soon in the hands of the public.

Few works more require a careful analysis than the *Reflections*. The discursiveness of the style, the torrent of eloquence which everywhere flows on so impetuously and majestically, and the immense variety of the topics which are passed in review, almost bewilder the mind of the reader, and leave it fascinated, satiated, and fatigued. A rapid survey of the leading features of this great work as they present themselves on perusal, with some general observations, will not be considered out of place. Burke was blamed by the critics at the time for the rhetorical inversion of censuring the proceedings of Englishmen for approving of the French Revolution before he had shown that the great movement was unworthy of their approbation. But this was no dexterous artifice: it is sufficiently accounted for by remembering how the book began to be written. What was first in the author's mind naturally came first from his pen. The conduct of Dr. Price and the Club at the Old Jewry having originally inspired him with alarm, and induced him to begin the work, their proceedings assumed, in his mind, something of an exaggerated importance, with which it is not easy for readers in our day to sympathize. Francis was



not entirely in the wrong. Perhaps some of the sarcasms against Dr. Price might have been omitted, without the book losing anything in real interest and value. The sanguine preacher is elevated to a rank which neither his literary attainments nor his political aspirations at all deserved. That either Priestley or Price had any bad intentions it would surely be too much to say. They were both men of high scientific attainments; men whose religious views, whether right or wrong, were most sincerely held; men whose philosophic researches made them deserve well of their country. Price's speculations as an economist were in some degree analogous to Burke's own; the simplicity and purity of Priestley's life have been admitted by his worst enemies: and it would have been better had Burke, while condemning what he thought to be the extravagance of their notions on the French Revolution, treated them in a kinder and more liberal spirit. But they were old enemies, and the friends of his old enemies. Their patron had long been that Lord Shelburne whom Burke had formerly hated, and who, in his dignified retirement as Marquis of Lansdowne, still threw the mantle of his protection over them, and cared not to conceal that his sympathies were with what was going on in France. While nominally assailing Priestley and Price, Burke believed himself to be, in reality, attacking Lord Lansdowne, whom he suspected of making use of those political theologians as his instruments, much in the same manner as Philippe Égalité, Duke of Orleans, has been represented making use of the most extreme democrats at Paris.\*

Independent of the sarcasms with which it was ac-

\* The following short paragraph from the Reflections, respecting Dr. Price, can only bear this interpretation:—"For my part, I looked upon

accompanied, no portion of the Reflections excited more indignation in certain quarters than the author's observations in reply to Price on the English Revolution of 1688. Even the moderate Sir James Mackintosh could not in his youth reconcile himself to such an interpretation of the acts of the patriotic statesmen who seated William and Mary on the throne, and bound themselves and the heirs and successors of all Englishmen to bear true allegiance to those sovereigns and their heirs and successors to the end of time. But what Sir James could not agree with in 1790, he fully accepted in his more advanced years, as many a passage in his weighty fragment on the Revolution very clearly demonstrates. The brilliant historian who has lately written so copiously and so eloquently on those times has also adopted the views which Burke first announced; and all candid students of history will at length admit with him, that what the statesmen of 1688 attempted was not so much to produce a revolution as to prevent one, and that while binding up together the title-deeds of William and Mary to the throne with the title-deeds of the English people to their liberties, the work was done in a scrupulously moderate and strongly conservative spirit. Halifax and Somers based the Bills of Rights on the solemn enactments of former generations, and on no abstract theories from which could be deduced the inalienable rights of man.

After attacking Price and the Revolution Society, and

that sermon as the public declaration of a man much connected with literary caballers and intriguing philosophers, with political theologians and theological politicians, both at home and abroad. I know they set him up as a sort of oracle, because, with the best intentions in the world, he naturally *philippizes* and chants his prophetic song in exact unison with their designs."

giving his impressions of the English Revolution, before entering minutely on the general question of French affairs, the author of the Reflections deliberately examines the rights of man that the French legislators of the National Assembly had solemnly and systematically proclaimed. Here again his opinions were received with astonishment; and yet, as one of the most candid and eloquent of his opponents, the Rev. Robert Hall, acknowledged, those who had read his previous works with attention had little reason for astonishment.\* Almost from the time he entered Parliament, the right of England to tax America, and the right of the Americans to tax themselves, were variously discussed: the one party, under George Grenville, considering the right by the mother-country indisputable; the other, under Lord Chatham, maintaining that taxation and representation were inseparable, and the exercise of a right to tax colonists who did not send members to the English Parliament as arbitrary as the levying of ship-money in the reign of Charles I. Burke could not bear to argue on these principles in the abstract. Again and again he had entreated the controversialists on both sides to leave the discussion of metaphysical rights to professors in schools and colleges, and to look at circumstances as they arose for guidance in the world of practical politics. Then, and ever since, he had invariably declared that he hated the very sound of an abstract principle. Even in the preceding year, as we have seen;† when Wilberforce commenced his legislative crusade against the slave-trade by moving certain general resolutions, Burke, while heartily supporting any plan for the abolition of the unrighteous traffic on the coast of Africa, had at the

\* See his *Miscellaneous Works*, p. 196.

† *Ante*, p. 260.

outset once more expressed his dislike of the deliberate assertion of general maxims independent of the circumstance in which they were to be applied. Fox's unqualified declaration that soldiers were not to forget that they were citizens had, as an abstract principle, even in the last session, been received by Burke with the greatest displeasure. It may be unhesitatingly pronounced that an utter abhorrence of all abstract principles whatever had, up to this period, been the most marked feature of his political system. Taking his stand on the common principles of morality as they were understood throughout the world, he had, subject to their approval, been the great professor of expediency; and succeeded in combining the highest moral truths with the most direct and practical views of the world and its affairs, as they separately arose. Grave enunciations of general principles as rights of man, when made by a legislative body of practical politicians such as the National Assembly of France professed to be, necessarily appeared to him the merest folly. An abstract principle would not clothe the naked, put bread into the mouths of the hungry, preserve order, or secure reverence to a constitution. Yet these were the real questions which French statesmen had to solve; they were their serious difficulties; all the rest was mere leather and prunella. When the abstract declarations of the rights of man had been voted with acclamations by solemn resolution, published in a hundred newspapers, read in a thousand churches, and proclaimed on a million housetops, the task of governing France, or any other old country with a complex condition of society, was still, as the French legislators found to their cost and mortification, as far off from being satisfactorily accomplished as ever.

Their conduct showed them to be merely men of theory. An examination of the different classes comprising the Assembly confirmed Burke in the conclusion to which he had arrived from their public acts, that the best of the representatives were but literary pedants, and that the great majority, composed of obscure country curates, obscure country solicitors, and obscure country doctors, were still worse qualified for the great and arduous undertaking of forming a new constitution for France. The most determined opponent of the Reflections had little to say against the keen analysis of the constituent portions of the National Assembly. That there was much ardent patriotism in the body it would be as absurd to deny as that this patriotism was destitute of all real experience in statesmanship. The most ardent admirers of the Revolution in our day pass slightly over the representatives who were framing abstract resolutions and theoretical constitutions which were afterwards utterly disregarded, and reserve all their sympathies for Robespierre in the Mountain, Danton in the Cordeliers, and the frensied populace in the Champ de Mars. The National Assembly has found few defenders: those who utterly dissent from Burke's views of the Revolution in general have in this respect endorsed his verdict.

The humiliation which the Assembly suffered when the lower classes of Paris marched on Versailles naturally brings the author to a description of the deeds of the fifth and sixth of October. That description, with the panegyric on Marie Antoinette, and the defence of the ancient opinions and chivalrous sentiments derived from the middle ages, constitutes perhaps the most splendid portion of the whole work. In all the range of English prose it would be difficult to find anything surpassing

those pages of brilliant eloquence; and the fervour of the style perhaps sometimes induces the reader to forget the depth of the truths which it conveys. Every one acknowledges the picture of the Queen of France to be a masterpiece of pathetic lamentation. Every one smiles at the taste of Francis who pronounced it pure foppery. Yet as soon as the book was published, Francis was not entirely put out of countenance. Fox and Fox's friends ridiculed the description as in the highest degree absurd and extravagant; but it found numerous defenders; and the literary controversy which it occasioned soon settled down into an almost unanimous and unqualified admiration of what at first provoked the sneers and the sarcasms of the wits at Brookes's. Robert Hall, himself a master of eloquence, contributed more than any one at last to effectually silence the laughers by his declaration, even when condemning the general principles of the *Reflections*, that those who could read without rapture what Burke had written of the unhappy Queen of France, might have merits as reasoners, but ought at once to resign all pretensions to be considered men of taste.\*

But one expression which Burke made use of in a passage immediately following the page about Marie Antoinette, was considered anything but tasteful. Alluding to the protection which in the middle ages learning had received from the nobility and the priesthood, he asserted that in seeking to become their masters it might fall into a state of still lower degradation; and he prophesied that even the men of letters, like Bailly and Condorcet, who took so eager and active a part in the Revolution, would find, as certainly they did find, learning itself cast into

\* Hall's *Apology for the Freedom of the Press: Miscellaneous Works*, p. 196.

the mire and trodden under the hoofs of a swinish multitude. The words swinish multitude were pronounced highly objectionable. Here, it was said, is a great statesman and philosopher, hitherto renowned for his humanity and philanthropy, deliberately stigmatizing the humbler classes of the people as swine. But this was just like his other inconsistencies in this season of his apostasy. He was not satisfied with deserting the cause of the people, but he must insult them by applying to them the epithet "swinish." Extracts were made from his published works, and especially from the ironical Vindication of Natural Society, all showing a strong leaning to the popular side, and being entitled Pearls cast before Swine, imputed to him the most sudden and violent change of opinion.\* But this was not thought enough. He was attacked both in verse and prose. In an Address from the Swinish Multitude to the Hon. Edmund Burke, not destitute either of wit or eloquence, he was accused of the grossest unfairness and selfish indifference to the sufferings of the lower orders. How horrible, his assailant exclaimed, to apply the appellation of swinish multitude to a poor and oppressed people! What a hoggish honour! What a sublime and beautiful compliment!† A half-mad and enthusiastic bookseller, called Thomas Spence, who kept a humble shop in Holborn and afterwards in Oxford-street, near St. Giles's, and who underwent imprisonment after imprisonment for his satirical and seditious ravings, wrote a political song to the tune of Derry down, professing to be a metrical address by

\* Pearls cast before Swine by Edmund Burke, scraped together by Old Hubert.

† An Address to the Hon. Edmund Burke from the Swinish Multitude.

Burke himself to the swinish multitude.\* . Even up to the present time extreme politicians who know very little else about Burke, delight in fastening upon this expression as an undeniable proof how little real sympathy he had with the popular cause.

It is, however, somewhat remarkable that Burke never used or intended to use the epithet in the manner he has been so long and so frequently blamed for doing. In a pamphlet written by John Gifford against the Earl of Lauderdale, Burke was defended for using the obnoxious term. This produced from himself a letter to that author, giving an explanation of the sense in which he used the words "swinish multitude;" and it is only just to his memory that his own interpretation, which, though it has been for many years in print, has been altogether disregarded both by his censurers and panegyrists, should be known. After some complimentary observations, Burke wrote: "As to what you are so good as to say in favour of my poor 'swinish multitude' (of which I wish I could with truth predicate that multitude), you had not the passage in your memory exactly. It is applied in general apparently, but in reality it is pointed to Mons. Bailly. It speaks of those literary men who had abandoned their patrons and protectors to court the multitude, to lead and to participate in their treasons. I predicted his fate but too truly, when I said that this pensioner of the unhappy Louis XVI. (he had six hundred pounds English from him, a great sum in old France) would be trampled under the hoofs of a swinish multitude. Miserable man! You know his end, as you know that his magistracy was the very first fruit of the rebellion. He 'threw his pearls before

\* Burke's Address to the Svinish Multitude.



swine, and they turned and rent him.' I never dreamt of our poor little English *piggen-riggen*, who go about squeaking and grunting quite innocently; my thoughts were on the wild boar of the Gallic forest. What ours may be, if they are let wild and have their tusks grown and are under the guidance of such an Euphorbus as Lord Lauderdale, I cannot answer for."\*

He could never have intended to stigmatize the English people, for throughout the whole book he is anxious to show how very different were their conduct and character from those displayed in Paris. His attack on the English freethinkers as the representatives of individual opinions is extremely characteristic; and particularly his sneers at his old adversary Bolingbroke, whose philosophic doctrines, as they were then being carried out in practice, appeared to him as absurd and superficial as when, in his youth some five-and-thirty years before, he was writing and Emin was copying the celebrated Letter in imitation of Bolingbroke's style and manner of reasoning. Since then those notions which Burke had thought so shallow and ridiculous had progressed with a vengeance. The sophisms which he had considered so extravagant in his youth were adopted by a French legislature, and applauded by the French people. His defence of a church establishment will, of course, be variously judged, though few persons will think that he was wrong in maintaining religion to be an essential element in all states as among every people. The mind, as he well said, could not endure a void. Even in France where all religion was prescribed, the natural prejudices and aspirations of mankind have resumed their sway,

\* Appendix to Gifford's Letter to the Earl of Lauderdale, edit. 1800.

and over a considerable portion of French society the influence of the French clergy is almost as great as ever. Yet no part of the *Reflections* was more attacked than the observations on the necessity of religious institutions. Mackintosh thought the reasoning mystical. An Evangelical divine, some years ago, gravely set himself to refute Burke's notions as full of High Church heresies.\* Dr. Priestley, in a letter to Burke, taunted him with his imputed Roman Catholic sympathies; and sarcastically argued that he ought to advocate, as the religion of the majority of his countrymen, the establishment of the Church of Rome in Ireland.†

His apology for the French nobility, though distinguished for its philosophy and eloquence, found almost as little favour from the enthusiastic advocates of change. The glaring vices both of the clergy and the aristocracy, it was said, were gently extenuated; all the evil they had done was kept out of view; the bright side of the picture was alone brought prominently into the foreground. This was true. The nobility and priesthood of France had much to answer for; secured for centuries with possessions and privileges such as no aristocracy and clergy had ever in their extent possessed before, they had used their acquisitions as to make themselves hated by the multitude. The French nobles had left the people without loyalty. The French clergy had allowed their flocks to grow up without religion. But, when all this is admitted, it may still be questioned whether the time when the clergy were deprived of their incomes, and the nobility were flying for refuge into

\* A Refutation of certain High Church Heresies contained in Burke's *Reflections*.

† Priestley's Letter to Burke.

foreign lands, was exactly the fitting occasion for Burke to dwell upon their shortcomings. He did not think so. He was not pretending to write impartial history for the instruction of future generations. His object was to guard against a danger which he supposed to threaten all society, and especially all aristocracies and all ecclesiastical establishments. To have dwelt especially at such a moment on the faults of the aristocracy and clergy, would, in his opinion, have been singularly out of place. To use his own beautiful illustration as it was applied by himself to this very question, Priam, as he weeps over the fallen Hector, disregards the children who still remain to him full of life and activity.\*

"I do not like," he wrote, "to see anything destroyed, any void produced in society, any ruin on the face of the land." This fine sentence, though selected by the ablest of the assailants for particular censure,† most characteristically depicts his state of mind as he surveyed man and all human institutions. Though he would sometimes metaphorically speak of government as a machine, he was the direct antithesis of the mechanical philosopher. Bentham and he might well disagree; his whole political life, and every page of the Reflections, were one continuous protest against the utilitarian philosophy. That men were not machines, that constitutions were not logical diagrams, that the institutions which had been established through successive generations were not mere material structures, built up one day to be pulled down another, but organic productions, slowly taking root through ages and growing with the progress of centuries, were truths he was never tired of inculcating. To destroy a monastery was easy, but how difficult to produce at plea-

\* Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.

† Mackintosh.

sure the state of feeling in which a monastery originated ! To abolish titles and all the privileges of a feudal aristocracy, was no difficult undertaking, and yet Napoleon, who could overrun Europe and leave a legislative code which has been pronounced a more glorious achievement than Marengo or Austerlitz, could not found an aristocracy such as that which the French republicans swept away, and the loss of which Burke so eloquently deplored. Other conquerors, like Cromwell, had found nature oppose the same insuperable obstacle to their plans. A priesthood and a nobility could not be made ; they might be regulated, they might be modified, they might be reformed ; but to destroy them as institutions when they once existed, was, in Burke's estimation, equivalent to the destruction of living beings, and decomposing them into their natural elements.

To set about making a constitution like that which the National Assembly was then busied in framing from elementary principles, was to him just as absurd as to set about making a man. Sir James Mackintosh's celebrated aphorism, that constitutions were grown, not made, was indeed only a repetition of what Burke said over and over again in the work which the young author of six-and-twenty so intrepidly assailed. The elaborate dissection of the French constitution of 1790, which forms the concluding portion of the *Reflections*, confirms in detail what he had generally expressed, that government with the rights of men, as they had been foolishly proclaimed, was impossible. He demonstrates most unanswerably that the French legislators were utterly false to their own theories ; and so true has everything been found which Burke wrote of that system of government, that the readers of the present time, instead of dissenting from

what the author said on the subject, will be inclined to blame him for spending so many pages in showing the folly and impracticability of absurdities so transparent. And yet these transparent absurdities had been praised even by such a man as Fox, as the efforts of transcendent wisdom. To judge of the value of this part of the Reflections, the particular year and month when it was written ought to be borne in mind. It was at the time when the National Assembly was nearly completing its legislative work, just when so many enthusiastic persons were praising it, that Burke pronounced that particular constitution of that particular time a production as ridiculous in theory as it was bungling in practice. Where is now that boasted constitution perfectly finished in 1791? Where are the proofs of the benefits it conferred on France? Time has only too abundantly testified to the judgment and foresight of the author of the Reflections.

The last paragraphs were singularly beautiful. Prophetic in every sense, when he alludes to what he believes to be the immediate consequences of the Revolution, in every sense those prophecies have been literally fulfilled. He tells his young correspondent that no permanent constitution had been established; that France in the state she was in when the Reflections were concluded could hardly remain; that revolution would follow revolution, and each revolution be purified by fire and blood. All this was in 1790, before the great French outbreak had entered into its more terrible phase, and the guillotine found its daily victims. The King was indeed already meditating a flight from Paris, and was nearly in every respect a prisoner; the monarchy had almost ceased to exist; but still patriots and philanthropists had yet reason to hope that the gloomier portents which had

shown themselves in the sky were not the formidable auguries of that general devastation and monstrous barbarity which were to appal the world. But Burke as he finished his task, and sent his last pages to press, saw the lightning in the cloud. He stood on a great eminence, and saw the coming doom while it was far off; and the stately towers and majestic temples still raised their heads proudly to the sky, little dreaming of their impending destruction. "Fly, Trojans! fly!" exclaimed Cassandra in accents that seemed strangely passionate, and with gestures that looked wildly incoherent to beholders, who being insensible to the danger, or to students, who looking back upon it from a more tranquil time, could not enter into the feelings of one who beheld, as it approached, all the woe and ruin to which the eyes of others were blind. Unquestionably there was much, perhaps too much, rhetorical imagery and fervour of manner in page after page of this celebrated book; and in, perhaps, all Burke's conduct during that exciting and momentous time. But if it be admitted that he saw further than other men of his day, and firmly believed that an era of political convulsions such as no other generation ever witnessed had begun, all his excitement, impetuosity, and eccentricity, necessarily follow. Thinking as he thought, and foreseeing what he foresaw, it was impossible for him not to be excited and violent, and to ordinary mortals to appear on the verge of madness. A mild prophet, a prophet who should predict death and ruin in the gentlest tones and the most placid manner, would indeed appear an extraordinary character. If Burke did not see clearly, it was from the intensity of the light which he alone beheld in all its lurid splendour. If he was mad, it was that madness which was in old time characterized by

the prophet, as "mad for the sight of his eyes which he saw."

The great body of the people were far from regarding the author of the Reflections as a madman. So far as public opinion was concerned, the sentiments he expressed found general, though of course not universal, acceptance. The immediate effect was to divide the English people into two parties.\* The one, composed of at least three-fourths of those who read and thought on the subject, heartily endorsed Burke's ideas and opinions on both the English and French Revolutions, and shared his anxiety to shut the contagion of this strange democracy from their own streets and homes. The Reflections became their political gospel; it contained the principles which they professed, the articles of faith in which they believed. The other party, of which Burke's old enemies of the India House, and the wealthy officials who had returned from the East and earnestly supported Hastings, formed no inconsiderable portion,† of course bitterly reviled the Reflections and the author. Sheridan was loud in his condemnation. Fox could not bear the book, and he did not keep his feelings to himself, as he perhaps might have done. In his opinion it was a libel on all free constitutions, and he felt it a duty to give utterance to his indignation against it in all companies. It has even been said that Fox himself intended taking up his pen to reply to the Reflections, until the appearance of Mackintosh's pamphlet prevented him from fulfilling his intention. How much truth there may be in the statement it is impossible to discover, but there can be no

\* See *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*.

† "The East Indians almost to a man."—Burke, in the *Thoughts on French Affairs*.

doubt that it was fortunate for Fox that he did not, as a writer, enter the lists against Burke. A violent rupture of their friendship he evidently did not at first anticipate, but he saw clearly that Burke, with his characteristic impetuosity, or, as Fox afterwards called it, wrong-headedness, would take his own course, and deliver his own opinions on the French Revolution without regard to friend or foe, as he had done on other occasions when his passions and convictions were deeply interested.

Francis of course still remained as much opposed to the *Reflections* as he had been when he wrote to Burke in the preceding February. But this difference of opinion did not produce the same coldness between him and Burke as it did between Burke and Fox. Francis and Burke had one powerful tie which held them together. Their common hatred of Hastings, and their sympathetic labours in the impeachment, overpowered their opposing sentiments on the French Revolution and all revolutions. Writing from Newmarket on the third of November, immediately after the publication of the *Reflections*, Francis, in a gentler tone than that of his criticism in February, still opposed the author's conclusions, though he said his duty, as Burke's friend, would now compel him to defend the book. He had not read more than a third of it, but he could not help to the author himself dissenting from the opinions it contained. He did not believe that the French ever had a solid constitution on which they could have based their reforms; the States-General had never, in his opinion, been of effectual service to the people. It was easy to pity the sufferings of individuals, but no tears were shed for nations. Gentle palliatives would not cure serious disorders. Now was the time when the French King was weak, for his people to take effectual



securities against the return of tyranny. "But," this imputed author of Junius finely concluded, "you dread and detest commotion of every kind, and so should I, and who would not? if a healthy repose could be obtained without tempest or stagnation. But, tell me,—has not God himself commanded or permitted the storm, to purify the elements?"\*

This letter had a very different effect on Burke than the former one from Francis on the same theme. It rather amused him, and in answering it he gave his feelings vent in a little quiet irony, which when his book was being received with so much enthusiasm, and was acquiring such a sudden and extensive popularity, he could well afford to indulge. He thanked Francis for his kind resolution of defending the work, though against his own convictions, and supposed that the brilliant pages he had sent to him against it were a kind of protest against the defence, which his friendship induced him to make, of opinions he could not privately countenance. Burke was much mistaken if he had any favourite form of oppression; he had never been the advocate of tyranny of any kind. Hastings's supporters had defended their principal by maintaining that the government of India under the Mahometan dynasty, which the British rule had superseded, was more tyrannical; but Burke declared that he could never bear to enter into such a parallel of crimes. "In your statement of this and every other matter," he added, "I am sorry to say I see the method of controversy rather than that of friendly admonition. I decline controversy with you, because I feel myself overmatched in a competition with such talents as yours. I have written this because there are circumstances

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 170.

in which silence may be construed into greater disrespect than contradiction, and I should be sorry that anything in my behaviour could bear the slightest appearance of disrespect to you; it would do little credit to my understanding. For the rest, I am not likely to alter my opinions. I never will be persuaded that because people have lived under an absolute monarchy, with all its inconveniences and grievances, therefore they are in the right to ruin their country on the speculation of regenerating it in some shape or other. I never can believe it right to destroy all the credit, power, and influence of the gentry of a country, and a great deal of their property, and to rest its administration in the hands of its mechanics. I cannot think the religion of the gospel, which you speak of with love and respect, or any other, can be promoted by the kind endeavours of those who do not so much as pretend to be any other than atheists. These are opinions that I have not lightly formed, or that I can lightly quit. Therefore let us end here all discussion on the subject.”\*

Though Francis, Fox, Sheridan, and Grey, who might be considered to represent the more extreme section of the party, disapproved of the *Reflections*, Burke had at least the satisfaction of knowing that the most distinguished of the surviving members of the old Whig connection that had followed the leadership of Lord Rockingham, fully accepted the book as embodying their political principles. Of that moderate but consistent band of Reformers, Lord John Cavendish, whose integrity and honour had been so long acknowledged by everybody, might be considered as the most eminent representative. Lord John’s public life had ended with the disastrous Election of 1784, when with so many other sup-

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 176.

porters of the Coalition he had lost his seat, and his familiar little figure, with his bland smile, reserved manners, rustic dress, and straightforward counsels, were sadly missed by his friends as they sat in their thinned ranks on the Opposition benches. The loss was most felt by Burke. Lord John was a restraint on Sheridan and others, who having recently joined the party, were not inclined to follow exactly the course which Lord Rockingham and the friends of Lord Rockingham had so steadily pursued. While so many younger men were accusing Burke of being a deserter from his old principles, Lord John Cavendish, who knew what Burke's principles had been, and what had been the settled principles of the party, thanked him for the present of the *Reflections*, assented to the author's general conclusions, and testified that they were what the members of this former connection would all have approved. "Though some of our allies," wrote Lord John, "have now and then run wild, our original set have always contended for that temperate resistance to the abuse of power, as should not endanger the public peace or put all good order into hazard. There is a scrap of Tacitus, which has run in my head many years as our motto, *Inter abruptam contumaciam et deforme obsequium pergere iter*.\* But I am sorry to learn that rational conduct neither meets with success or credit."†

Lord John's neighbour, the original, eccentric, and independent Powis, was so enraptured with the book that he could not lay it down. The resident graduates at Oxford transmitted through Mr. Windham their thanks to the author, though some of the dons remembering how Burke had blamed them for their courtly eagerness

\* Ann. iv. 20.

† Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 171.

in encouraging the American war, and declaring all who opposed it the supporters of rebels, could not yet find it in their hearts to bestow the degree of doctor on one who had so long been associated with Whig principles and tolerant theories. His own place of education was kinder. Very shortly after the publication of the *Reflections*, the dignitaries of the Dublin University honoured themselves by gracefully conferring the LL.D. on the greatest of its sons.\* At the dinner-table at Wimbledon, when Pitt, Wilberforce, Grenville, Dundas, and other Ministerialists met together in the November, nothing was talked about but Burke's *Reflections*. Pitt and Wilberforce were its admirers, but, as might be expected, the unimaginative but masculine Grenville its assailant; and the efforts of enemies as well as friends all concurred in keeping up the impression it had produced.†

In no place was the effect greater than in the Court of George III. It was, indeed, almost ludicrous. Not one word had any of the courtiers for many years ventured to say in praise of that Mr. Burke who had so steadily opposed the American war, abolished by his economical reforms so many of the nice sinecures which they had so uninterruptedly enjoyed, and was then so indefatigably engaged in prosecuting, or, as they termed it, persecuting Warren Hastings. But George III. read the book, and was highly pleased with it. He spoke about it to all who came near him, earnestly recommending them to examine it attentively. "It will do you good—do you good," said the King. "It is a book that every gentleman ought to read." Some of his

\* See Burke's Letters, in returning thanks for those academical honours, *Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 180.

† Wilberforce's Diary, vol. i. p. 284.

favourites had the honour of being presented with elegantly-bound copies from his Majesty's own hand; those who had not this gratification provided themselves with the work, and were careful to let their royal master know that they were busily studying what he had deigned so highly to praise. As the King had said that all who were gentlemen ought to read the Reflections, of course all the persons in the royal household who considered themselves gentlemen felt themselves bound to read the volume. The author was as loudly praised as he had a very few short months before been loudly censured. His genius was acknowledged. His character was admired. Fox was still consigned to perdition; but for Burke there might be hope. He was a great man. He was a good man.

Miss Burney felt all her former love return for him whose recent conduct she had so deplored. She had not, after all, been mistaken in her first impressions. Fierce, impetuous, unrelenting as he had been to the accused Indian statesman, whom the King and Queen had delighted to honour, it had been the mere eccentricity of genius, and all had come right at last. Not being afraid of any royal anathema, since the prescription against Burke and his writings had been taken off, she declared herself of the same opinion with their common friend, Mrs. Montague, that the Reflections was the deepest, most animated, and exalted work that she had ever read; and while she once more returned under the spell of the enchanter, she even began to entertain a salutary suspicion whether Burke, being so right on the French Revolution, might, after all, be utterly and hopelessly wrong on other matters, even when she could not understand and had so violently blamed his conduct.

“When I read such a book,” she wrote, “as this, I am apt to imagine the whole of such a being must be right as well as the parts, and that the time may come when the mists that obscure the motives and incentives to those actions and proceedings which seem incongruous may be chased away.”\* It would be difficult to decide how much of this accomplished authoress’s admiration of Burke and his work arose at first from the royal approbation and how much from genuine delight with the *Reflections*. But the King’s constant expressions in favour of the new book doubtless assisted Miss Burney’s appreciation. Mr. Burke had been quite as elegant, brilliant, and philosophical in Westminster Hall, when the literary maid of honour sympathizingly recorded the profound aphorism of her brother James, an untutored sailor, that the great orator’s words were “such stuff.”†

The French nobility and princes who were in exile of course applauded the work. How many of them read it, and still more how many of them understood it after they had read it, may be doubtful. It was sufficient that Burke, as an Englishman, had attacked the Revolution and defended their privileges: he could not but be an eloquent writer and profound thinker. Poor Louis XVI., who had some pretensions to be considered an English scholar, and delighted in rendering English historical works into his own language, in his confinement, which gradually grew more rigorous, translated, as young Richard Burke was some months afterwards informed, every page of the *Reflections* with his own hand. He too might think that, like the more fortunate King of England, every gentleman ought to

\* Madame D’Arblay’s Diary, vol. v. p. 170.

† *Ibid.* vol. iv. p. 96.

read such a book in favour of kings, without, perhaps, condescending to consider what the millions were to do who were not, and could not be, gentlemen.

The work was indeed especially pleasing to sovereigns. All the crowned heads of Europe were ready to send to the great Mr. Burke, who had put himself forward as the antagonist of the Revolution, which surprised them without instructing them, their thanks and acknowledgments for his splendid services in the common cause of kings. To those who really meant well to the people they governed, as well as to those who only thought of maintaining and increasing their royal authority, the book was equally acceptable. King Stanislaus of Poland, the princes and sovereigns of Germany, even the august Catherine of Russia, who in her declining years was, as a woman and a ruler, what she had so long been, all, under one form or another, sent the author of the *Reflections* their congratulations. After years of neglect and depreciation, the position he suddenly attained in Europe, and the praise with which he was the object, could not but be flattering to Burke's pride. Yet flattery, and especially the flattery of those whom all the rest of the world flatters, is a dangerous thing. Even great philosophers, earnest in their desires for the welfare of mankind, sincere in the cause they have espoused, farseeing in the season of commotion and change, are after all but human. The applause of European monarchs was not, though he was himself never sensible of it, without its influence on Burke. After having had his counsels so long rejected in England, he began almost to think that he might be listened to as the disinterested adviser of the great sovereigns of the Continent. Had they been as disinterested as himself he might have accomplished some

good. But from of old men had been cautioned not to put their trust in princes. This lesson Burke had himself frequently taught. Yet, with all his wisdom and experience, he seemed for a time, amid the revolutionary excitement, to forget it ; and this temporary oblivion was not without serious consequences. Even the sorrowing and imprisoned Marie Antoinette was not likely to listen readily to his advice ; and what kind of sympathy could there be between him and a Catherine of Russia ? Alas ! history and biography, so full of the crimes of the wicked, contain also a sad catalogue of the mistakes of the good and the follies of the wise.

If it was natural that all courtly circles should admire the Reflections, it was equally natural that the outsiders beyond the pale of both Whig and Tory parties should dislike the volume. The mighty bulwark it opposed to their theories and schemes was vexatiously visible. All Burke's old enemies, such as Mrs. Macaulay and the writers whom Lord Lansdowne patronized, were of course up in arms. Many new allies of various opinions rushed to reinforce their ranks. Pages might be filled with a detailed enumeration of the different persons who assailed the book in pamphlets and through the newspapers. The number of set replies to the work has been counted at forty-eight ; and perhaps this scarcely represents the whole numerical phalanx. Those productions, with two or three exceptions, have long been forgotten ; the defence of the rights of man by Mary Wollstonecroft made but little impression beyond her own immediate sect of unpopular thinkers , but there is one book on the rights of man still reprinted, and among certain classes still read ; and the author, whose name has been held up by some respectable people as synonymous with the



evil principle itself, demands some notice in the life of one with whom he had so little in common.

He had in former days been a staymaker and excise-man : his name was Thomas Paine. He possessed but little education ; he had been taught when at school no learned language ; he had read but very few books ; he was to write nothing until he was far advanced into the middle period of life ; even then his pen was called out for mere occasional service, and with no intention of making a literary display ; and yet his writings produced on the popular mind an effect for which those who would continue to echo the current language of scorn, execration, and contempt about the man and his strange career, must find it somewhat difficult to account. His private life, on which his enemies have malignantly commented as a proof that bad political and religious principles are naturally associated with bad morals, does not, when charitably reviewed, appear to have been much worse than the lives of the great majority of mankind. His morals were certainly not worse than those of many distinguished champions of Church and State, who have been cheered by senates, honoured by sovereigns, and praised in leading articles and Quarterly Reviews. He had the misfortune of being on bad terms with his wife, and of separating from her, just as eminent Conservatives, orthodox peers and right honourable gentlemen, have sometimes lived on bad terms with their wives, and have signed, as Paine did, articles of separation. He quarrelled with his Majesty's Commissioners of Excise, and was guilty of some irregularities, just as much higher placed official gentlemen have done whose attachment to the constitution of their country and the religion established by law has never been ques-

tioned. His method of criticism, which a late distinguished Quarterly reviewer brought to such exquisite perfection, is not so acceptable in the present day as it was when that eminent example of all public and domestic virtue, George IV, sat on the British throne ; and even the democratic and irreligious writings of Paine may be blamed, without their author being represented as a monster of iniquity. We are at length not disinclined to admit that a good man may hold very bad political and theological tenets ; and that very good religious and political principles may be professed by very bad men.

Paine was by nature a rebel. He had no country ; he had no ties. A kind of political Paul Jones, in all his actions and all his speculations there was much of the rover and the privateer. To the last he stood alone ; and there was something of genuine independence in his solitary freedom. In England he might think himself a foreigner ; but while in Paris, in the time of the Revolution, he preserved those sympathetic instincts which make an Englishman abhor wanton bloodshed. Not one of the sanguinary deeds which brought shame on Robespierre and the French democracy, can be justly said to have been advised by Paine. He was in favour of saving the life of the King ; the necks of several of those who were condemned to death were preserved from the guillotine by his interposition ; himself at last prevented by the merest accident from suffering by that dread instrument of the Revolution, he sent no victim to its insatiable maw. His worst fault, like that of Jean Jacques Rousseau, was excessive vanity ; and in his case, as in that of Rousseau, it was the fruitful parent of many other faults, inciting him to much of the evil of his misdirected life.

As far as Paine saw he generally saw clearly, and characteristically thought there was nothing hidden from his eyes. Great problems in politics, morals, and theology, which have perplexed the deepest thinkers in all ages, were decided by him promptly and at once, without hesitation and without a doubt of the wisdom of his decisions. The pamphlet which he published during the American crisis under the title of *Common Sense*, and which is admitted to have prepared the minds of the colonists for their separation from the mother-country, is not, any more than the rest of his works, remarkable for knowledge, eloquence, or profound reasoning. But, like the rest of his works, it is singularly plain and perspicuous; written by an ordinary man for ordinary people, it indulges in no allusions which they cannot understand, appeals to no feelings with which they cannot sympathize. His mind was essentially practical. Common sense was indeed its staple. Paine wrote and talked as common people wrote and talked, and the common people were affected by what he addressed essentially to them on their political affairs. It is not surprising to those who have read his writings that Paine possessed a mechanical genius, and could invent iron bridges with an engineering skill of no despicable order. Men, however, not being machines, but moral beings, require something more than the hard mechanical faculty to deal with them and their wants and aspirations about all relating to this world and that future existence in which all nations, the rudest as well as the most enlightened, have, in some form or other, believed. Proud of the success of his pamphlet on the American quarrel, Paine from that moment considered himself a great man; and felt that even with his own

unaided powers, if then he could only get to England, and there publish such another treatise as *Common Sense*, the effect would be at once decisive, and put an end to the American war. A quick, eager man, with bright, keen eyes and a cynical expression on his carbuncled countenance, showing much confidence in himself and contempt for other people, he judged men and things through optics which were liable at any time to be disturbed by his passions. He professed particularly to love America and the great man who had, under Providence, been the principal agent in achieving her independence with so much undisputed wisdom and moderation. But because Washington afterwards looked coldly upon him, from a natural dislike of his deistical writings, Paine immediately addressed the most disinterested patriot as treacherous in private friendship and a hypocrite in public life, as one who had either abandoned good principles or never professed any principles at all, as either an apostate or an impostor.\*

Burke was treated in the same manner. He had been kind to Paine. On returning to England from America, the ardent cosmopolitan brought with him letters of introduction to the statesman from the family of Colonel Laurens, ex-President of Congress, of whom, when he was a prisoner in the Tower, Burke so humanely interposed to obtain the release. The statesman earnestly assisted Paine in his efforts to bring his model of an iron bridge to the knowledge of men of science; and Paine in return was very frank in his communications on all affairs relating to the American contest. From Paris during the preceding year and at the beginning of 1790, he continued to write copiously to Burke on the Revolution

\* Letter to Washington.

as it proceeded, exulting heartily over all that had been done, and still more on what he assured his correspondent the more decided democrats of the National Assembly intended to do. Burke had little desire to enter into an argumentative controversy with Paine, and for months allowed him to tell his own tale in his own manner. The speech on the Army Estimates, which produced almost as much effect in Paris as in London, at once ranked Burke, much to Paine's surprise, among the most resolute opponents of the Revolution. The announcement of the speedy publication of the Reflections showed still more clearly that the great orator and writer had taken his part, and that he was not likely to hesitate or to change his opinions. Paine wrote no more letters to Burke; but he announced to all his French acquaintances that as soon as Burke's book appeared he would answer it, and, as a matter of course, annihilate it. Though far from being so practised a writer as the eloquent philosopher against whom he eagerly entered the lists, the first portion of the Rights of Man, which made its appearance a few months after the Reflections, evidently cost the author much less trouble than the work to which it was a reply. All Paine's professed friendship for Burke was forgotten. Not one generous expression with respect to the statesman and author fell from the rebellious republican's pen. Every uncharitable construction of the motives which compelled Burke to oppose the French Revolution was eagerly adopted. Paine even intimated his belief, that from certain transactions under another name in the city, the author of the Reflections had been liberally paid by the Government for his timely defence of monarchy and his onslaught on the democratic innovations of the National

Assembly. The style of Paine's pamphlet was the same as that which he had used with such an effect in *Common Sense*: simple, clear, and popular, adapted to minds possessing the most elementary knowledge, intelligible to every understanding. The treatise was neither distinguished by much acquired information nor much profound thought; but it skilfully expressed what plain men, who had not entered deeply into the causes of governments and institutions, and who had completely emancipated themselves from the prejudices of country and of creed, might naturally think. Among such persons it found readers and made converts. It is only just to admit that Paine, with all his faults and errors, had real literary merit; and that with a better cultivation his mind might have produced works far beyond mediocrity. Even in the *Rights of Man* there may be met with an allusion or a metaphor frequently happy, and occasionally beautiful. Burke himself might have envied the language in which he was described as feeling for the royal sufferers, but having no sympathy for the victims whose lives had been spent in the Bastille, as being not so much affected by the reality of distress touching his heart, as by the showy resemblance of it striking his imagination, as pitying the plumage but forgetting the dying bird.\* Such an image is worth remembering in connection with the republican and the deist. Paine's errors were not likely to be treated with much tenderness by Englishmen. He

\* "Not one glance of compassion, not one commiserating reflection that I can find throughout his book, has Mr. Burke bestowed on those who lingered out the most wretched of lives—a life without hope—in the most miserable of prisons. It is painful to behold a man employing his talents to corrupt himself. Nature has been kinder to Mr. Burke than he is to her. He is not affected by the reality of distress, but by the showy resemblance of it striking his imagination; pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird."—*Paine, in Rights of Man.*

shocked their patriotic feelings. He outraged their religious prejudices. From Burke himself he certainly deserved, and as certainly received, little consideration. The philosophic statesman admitted that his acute assailant possessed a style, but denied that he even understood the logical tendency of his own principles. From this time a pamphlet from Burke was generally followed with an answer from Paine. As Burke himself jocosely said, they appeared to hunt together in couples, and the unhesitating freethinker only moved as he was dragged along by the great defender of the monarchy and the constitution.\* Yet we may look with some degree of toleration on the man who played so strange a part in the revolutionary drama of his time, and who, in his own wild way, has gained for himself a place in history. His existence was no happy one. Anathematized by orthodox and conservative England, neither France nor America, whom he so much praised, was ready to acknowledge him as a citizen. Recklessly warring against thrones and churches, he stood at last abandoned by the universe,—an outlaw amid all creation. His life is not without its moral; and over his grave, when his remains, which Cobbett sympathizingly exhumed and brought to England, shall find a grave, heavenly mercy may not disdain to shed a tear.†

\* Letter to William Elliot.

† In an abstract of the Life of Paine, recently published by Mr. Holyoake, it is stated (note, p. 42) that "Paine's bones are still in England and above-ground." Why can they not be buried?

## CHAPTER XL.

1790-1791.

## SEPARATION.

BURKE had in the November, 1790, set most persons to reflect seriously on the tendency of the French Revolution. Many pens were busily engaged in attacking the Reflections, and himself as the author. His name, either in praise or censure, was on the tongues of all who took any interest in political affairs. While so many thousands of minds were being engrossed with the eloquent pages he had at last sent forth from Dodsley's publishing house, he remained quietly at his rural retreat at Beaconsfield, not much elated by all the panegyrics which were being made upon him by his enraptured readers, and not at all affected by the censures which a small minority of extreme politicians pronounced upon himself as an apostate from his principles, and his book as a vehement protest against all the aspirations of people for a free government, under either a republican or a monarchical form.

The new Parliament was summoned to meet at Westminster on Tuesday the twenty-fifth of November. Burke had, very soon after the appearance of the Reflections, to attend to more pressing matters than even French affairs. He took a house for this session in Duke Street, St. James's; it was distinguished from the



rest by being, as he called it, a red house ; and thither, putting France and the Revolution for a little while out of his thoughts, he held a long morning's meeting with Francis and the solicitors for the prosecution of Hastings on the general business of the impeachment. When the late Parliament had been prorogued, war between Spain and England seemed imminent about certain violent proceedings on the part of the Spanish authorities at Nootka Sound. A peace was being negotiated between Austria and Turkey. A war had just been terminated between Russia and Sweden. War between Russia and Turkey was being actively waged on the Danube; and the English Government was wisely opposed to the aggressions of the great northern Power, whose might in Europe was just beginning to disturb that old continental equilibrium for which so many battles had been fought and so many treaties signed. The Netherlands were in a ferment. All Europe was in unwonted commotion. But, however interesting might be those foreign affairs to statesmen, and to none more than Burke himself, he felt that his first and imperious duty was to that prosecution which, through years of toil, discouragement, and obloquy, he had so zealously, so patiently, so unweariedly, striven to carry out.

Extraordinary rumours were abroad. After having just before the close of the last session accused Burke of designedly protracting the impeachment until a new Parliament should meet, to give the accused statesman additional expense and trouble, the defenders of Hastings now suddenly whispered, and it was said that the Lord Chancellor and a great majority of the Peers would act on the opinion that, according to law, the fact of a dissolution of Parliament had put an end to the impeach-

ment altogether. The principle at stake was of the most momentous nature. It was indeed a question of privilege, and of a question of privilege of somewhat different importance than the paltry and vexatious points which George Grenville and others had pertinaciously raised against the people whom they professed to represent. The power of the Commons to bring to condign punishment any great state offender was annihilated, if the Crown could, by dissolving Parliament at any moment, stop the prosecution. On the maintenance of the principle that no dissolution by the will of the sovereign could virtually annul an impeachment by the Commons, depended the efficiency of the popular branch of the Legislature as a check on public officials, and indeed the whole doctrine of ministerial responsibility. It seems strange that any sane man, who had read history and knew something of constitutional law, should, in such an age, have seriously come to an opposite conclusion: it is still more strange that such an unwarrantable maxim should have been gravely asserted by great lawyers and orators, who considered themselves champions of liberty and desirous of the extension of popular rights throughout the world.

At first it seemed that such an opinion could scarcely be seriously maintained. On the twenty-sixth of November, before the Speaker had read the King's Speech and the debate on the Address began, Burke being the first to open his lips in that new Parliament, the last in which he was ever to sit, alluded to the trial, which it appeared had been, in the preceding session, fixed to be renewed on the day they then assembled; and asked the Speaker whether any temporary arrangement made with the House of Lords could affect the prosecution

ordered by the Commons? The Speaker, Addington, replied most decidedly in the negative. Pitt said that he was not sorry the subject had been mentioned, even at such a time ; and that he could scarcely believe the Lords had any intention of acting in a manner at variance with the constitution and the privileges of the House of Commons.\*

It was necessary that the matter should be settled. Although, at the prorogation, it had been appointed that the trial should be proceeded with as soon as ever the Legislature reassembled, the Lords took no notice of the circumstance. Days passed on, and yet no message came from them to the Commons informing the representatives of the people that the first tribunal of the land was ready to continue the impeachment which had for three years occupied so much of public attention and had called forth such unrivalled displays of eloquence. Their Lordships remained silent ; and their silence was most expressive. It was clear that, without some direct expression of the will of the House of Commons, those who had the direction of business in the House of Lords intended tacitly to act on the extraordinary theory that the impeachment no longer remained in the state it was when the two Houses separated at the close of the late session. It was clear that, trusting to the efforts they knew Hastings's friends were prepared to make in support of such an unconstitutional proposition, no steps would be taken by Lord Thurlow and his legal followers in the upper House until the temper of the Commons had been thoroughly ascertained.

But Burke was not the man to allow judgment to go against him by default. Since doubts had been thrown

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxviii. p. 900.

on one of the most important of all the privileges of the House of Commons, it was necessary, not only for the trial then in suspense, but for all succeeding generations, to put the matter beyond dispute by solemnly and authoritatively ascertaining and declaring what in this respect was the constitutional law of England. This was not passing an abstract resolution without any necessity, like the legislators of the French National Assembly, but establishing a great principle by a particular case which had unexpectedly arisen, and imperatively required immediate decision.

Burke gave notice that on the very earliest occasion he would move for a Committee of the whole House to report on the impeachment. Pitt, applauding the step, and at the same time affirming that his mind was fully made up as to the course the Commons ought to take, still thought that the principle involved in the business was of such magnitude, that everything ought to be done with the greatest deliberation. Hastings's supporters threatened to oppose the Speaker's leaving the chair. On Friday, December the seventeenth, the day appointed for formally taking the matter into consideration, it was plain to all who understood the question, that a debate second to none in importance since the passing of the Bill of Rights was to be entered into by the Commons of England.

Burke adopted a plan of tactics which disconcerted his opponents. When the House met he formally moved that it should resolve into a Committee on the impeachment; but, reserving himself for another stage of the discussion, allowed the supporters of Hastings to find arguments against the Speaker leaving the chair. They complained loudly of this proceeding. They could not,

they said, answer arguments against the continuance of the impeachment, since he had given them none. All they could do was to declaim on the merits and sufferings of Hastings ; and to deny that one Parliament was bound by the acts of its predecessor. One gentleman made the House merry by gravely saying that they knew nothing of Edmund Burke ; he was politically defunct ; Edmund Burke, the manager of the impeachment, had ceased to exist.\*

But as the opponents of the motion did not venture to divide, and the House went into Committee, Burke immediately proved himself to be still alive. He had been told, he said, that he existed no longer in fact ; that he was the mere ashes and shadow of what he had been ; that he was reduced to the mere metaphysical abstraction of a man, and that being an abstract Member of Parliament, he could only move an abstract proposition. Politically dead, however, as he might be, and only metaphysically alive, an abstract proposition, he assured the House, he would not move. It should be one essentially practical. This resolution would put nothing in doubt, but be a plain assertion of their privileges, as they had been handed down in uninterrupted succession for five hundred years. Those who wished to separate the general question of an impeachment from the individual case were the proposers of an abstract question, and not he who, referring to the journals of Parliament, took for his model the vote on the impeachment of Lord Danby. He moved the simple and direct resolution :—“ That it appears an impeachment by this House, in the name of the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled, and of all the Commons of Great Britain, against

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxviii. p. 1021.

Warren Hastings, Esq., late Governor-General of Bengal, for sundry crimes and misdemeanors, is now depending.”\*

A debate began which continued for three days. It was kept up by conspicuous ability, and had some peculiar features, such as are not often displayed. The demarcations of party were momentarily effaced. The lawyers in the House took one side; the statesmen, the other. Between Fox, Pitt, and Burke, there was little difference of opinion: they felt that a great constitutional principle was at stake, and they emulously contended together in the cause of the Commons and the people. The lawyers, on the other hand, putting out of view the logical consequence of their doctrine, indulged in the narrowest technicalities, and overlooked the whole spirit of the constitution which had slowly organized itself through successive generations.

The Opposition was led by Erskine, the most distinguished advocate then at the bar, and one who, if not a great lawyer, was unquestionably the greatest barrister that ever addressed a jury. When he entered Parliament even Pitt looked upon him as likely to become a formidable antagonist, and the Opposition regarded him as one of their ablest supporters. Yet his rank in the House of Commons had never equalled what he had attained in Westminster Hall; and even the consideration that he did enjoy, as he sat among his political friends in the House of Commons, was a pale reflection from the splendour of his fame in the courts of law, more than from any brilliant vigour displayed by him in the popular assembly, where Pitt and Fox joined nightly in conflict, the wit of Sheridan vividly scintillated, and

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iii. p. 512.

Burke's eloquence and philosophy had so long enriched and elevated every great discussion. Erskine stood in the first rank of orators. Burke himself had scarcely surpassed the noble passage about the Indian chief contending against the advance of British dominion, in the speech delivered by the great advocate in defence of Stockdale. His eye fascinated a jury. His noble presence inspired involuntary respect. But in the House of Commons his great intellectual and oratorical qualities could not be called forth. He seemed out of his element. The chastiser of overbearing judges, the delight of patriotic juries, subsided into a very ordinary person when he put off his wig and gown, and exchanged the atmosphere of the courts of law for the atmosphere of the House of Commons. It would have been well for him to have contentedly acquiesced with the reputation he had acquired in one sphere, and have quietly borne the mortification of his failure in the other. But he was always restless and uneasy. With a vanity that was almost childish, he loved to talk of himself, of all that he had done, and of all that he was going to do. His triumphs at the Bar might console him for his want of success in the Senate, but the exhibition he made of himself when contending against the Ministers, and even his own friends, was sometimes wretched in the extreme.

Of all his failures, perhaps none was so ignominious as when on this constitutional question he voluntarily pitted himself against Fox, Pitt, and Burke, for once combined. His speech in defence of Stockdale, the publisher, had been universally admired; the two speeches he made in the House of Commons during this debate were treated by his powerful antagonists with a contempt which they indeed deserved. He boasted beforehand of

giving a deathblow to the prosecution, and of convincing his hearers that an impeachment by the Commons must necessarily be abated by a dissolution of Parliament. He intrepidly moved an amendment to Burke's resolution. He rose and spoke with great fluency and apparent animation, and yet it soon appeared that on the subject the great advocate had really nothing worth hearing to say. Instead of receiving his words as those of an oracle, and cheering them with rapturous enthusiasm, the House preserved a frigid silence. He was seized with a nervous trepidation. He was obliged to confess that he did not feel himself at home. He even admitted that he had not examined the journals of the House, or even looked into the records for information, although, on such a subject, they were of course authorities of the highest importance. At last he completely lost his head, complained of illness, and was suddenly obliged to sit down. On the following day of the debate he spoke again. With equal confidence and ignorance he assured the House that he had just been furnished by a friend with a precedent that would perfectly astonish them, and be decisive of the question. All was curiosity and expectation. This mighty precedent, the case of a Sir Adam Blair, in the time of Charles II., was however found to be a very small affair; and instead of showing, as Erskine asserted, that, by the rule and practice of Parliament, impeachments were ended by a dissolution, it only showed that when a new Parliament had assembled, and the Lords had sent a message to the Commons informing them that they were ready to go on with the trial of Sir Adam, the representatives of the people had, in their discretion, declined to proceed further with that particular prosecution. It seemed



surprising that a man of so much forensic ability, so many intellectual accomplishments, and such splendid eloquence, as Erskine was admitted by everybody to possess, should on such a subject flounder from absurdity to absurdity, and prove himself destitute of all analytical acumen in the region of practical statesmanship and political philosophy.

Burke, in reply, directed the full battery of his wit, oratory, and varied knowledge at the great advocate who had placed himself in so miserable a position. Erskine's warmest admirers acknowledged that the castigation he received was deserved, and that the observations made between the poorness of the part he played in the House of Commons in comparison with that which he performed in Westminster Hall were strikingly just. "Well might," remarked Burke, "the honourable gentleman say that in this House he did not feel himself quite at home. The Bar is the scene of his wealth, of his reputation, of his fame; this House is only the scene of his duty. . . . We have only the refuse of the honourable and learned gentleman's abilities. We obtain him only at second-hand. His partiality for home is easily accounted for. Home is home, let it be ever so homely, and, in consequence of this partiality, the gentlemen of the long robe are led to measure the proceedings of Parliament by those of the Courts, and to prescribe the rules of the Court as the standard of the usage of Parliament."

He met with masterly power the arguments, such as they were, that Erskine and other lawyers had brought forward; and commented finely on the manner in which they had ingeniously set themselves to prove that one of the most important privileges of the House of Commons was virtually annihilated. "In treating of the excellence

of any art," he said, "it is usual to illustrate the advantage with which its exercise is attended. Why, then, have they not shown that this exercise of law is beneficial? Why have they not pointed out its tendency to convict guilt and clear innocence? Or how can they justify that law, the only effect of which that can be perceived, is to provide for the concealment and impunity of guilt? In contending for the law, on the principles of its defects, they act in the same manner as if they enumerated the gout, the stone, and other diseases to which the body was subject, among the parts of the constitution. Instead of representing their lady of law as a beautiful woman, well proportioned, they had represent her as an ugly, decrepit, and misshapen hag. They break a lance with all comers, not for the beauties and perfection of their mistress, but for her stinking breath and her toothless gums. With them justice may mumble a rich criminal, but can never devour him. Justice is to do everything but judge. Every accident works a discontinuance in her process. She always fights to be defeated. Her work is always to begin, never to end. The shortcomings of the law are the objects, not of the apology, but of the claim of its assertors, and they have sworn allegiance to her divine errors and indelible defects." \*

Erskine felt keenly the severe handling he received from Burke. He winced perceptibly under it; his vanity was wounded; his sensitive spirit deeply galled. He stammered out a few sentences, implying that Burke's cutting reprehension was scarcely in harmony with their habits of friendship. Burke had not forgotten Erskine's conduct on Stockdale's trial, when he had so publicly and

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iii. p. 518.

so eloquently denounced the prosecution of Hastings ; nor was he ignorant of the accomplished barrister's vehement championship of the French Revolution and his condemnation of the Reflections. He had publicly separated himself from Sheridan ; he now as publicly separated himself from Erskine. " Friendship ! " he exclaimed indignantly ; " the honourable and learned gentleman best knows what claim he has to my friendship." \*

Erskine's motion was defeated by a great majority. Burke's resolution was then put, and triumphantly carried.

There was, however, still something more to be done. This long debate had brought the House up to the Christmas recess, and when Burke went down to Beaconsfield to spend one of the last of those happy Christmases he was ever to spend, he felt that his victory was only half gained. The House, it was true, had deliberately affirmed, under his instigation, that the impeachment of Hastings was still depending ; the question was in a certain degree settled ; but there were precedents which might yet be followed, for, after having vindicated the constitutional principle by the resolution, going no further with a prosecution which had occupied such a length of time. Burke was determined that his great labours in the cause of India should not have this lame and impotent conclusion. Notwithstanding the correspondence which daily flowed in upon him ; notwithstanding the applause of high ambassadors and royal personages for his endeavours to stem the revolutionary torrent ; notwithstanding that he was meditating other works on the same fertile theme, he would not even then give up the prosecution of Hastings. It still remained personally

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxviii. p. 1169.

his great object. To this even France and all European convulsions were secondary. It was the undertaking on which he most valued himself. Of all his efforts for civilization, justice, and amelioration, though this impeachment might be the least appreciated by the world, he felt himself that it was the most deserving of reward.\*

As soon as the House again met on the new year, 1791, he consulted his friends on the step next to be taken. Pitt seeing, perhaps, that the separation between Burke and Fox was near, was in an unusually indulgent mood. Hitherto Burke and he had been more hostile to each than any other of the leading public men, Burke's vehement invectives being met with the Minister's arrogant scorn, and the language exchanged between them trenching on the utmost limits of Parliamentary decorum. But as the antagonist of the French Revolution, Burke had become a potentate superior to the Minister, with all the aid of his official position ; and the younger statesman began at length to soothe and conciliate the author of the *Reflections*, as much as he had formerly sought to irritate and annoy one whose opposition to himself and his policy had been so decided and pertinacious. It would have been wise had Fox profited by the example the Minister set, and impressed upon his personal followers the expediency of not harassing Burke, whose superiority to themselves they could not but confess, and whose grey hairs and long services to the party had perhaps entitled him to some claim to indulgence. Pitt promised Burke

\* "If I had called for a reward, which I have never done, it would be for the sixteen years I laboured with the utmost assiduity, and met with the least success,—I mean in the affairs of India. Others may praise it only for the intention ; in that surely they are not mistaken."  
—*Letter to a Noble Lord.*

his support in any reasonable plan to carry the impeachment forward, and finally bring it to judgment.

In accordance with a notice he had given a few days before, Burke, on the fourteenth of February, rose, as he stated, to follow up his former motion. He congratulated the Members that at the commencement of the new Parliament their House had been proved, by a recent discussion, to be always another and yet the same; that, like the great luminary, it preserved its identity under all its changes, that it set in justice and rose in justice. Their right had been vindicated: the duty which that right implied was now to be enforced. He then entered into a long detail about the impeachment, and while he admitted that it had occupied much time, stated that he fully expected himself that it would occupy three years. Yet those three years only meant sixty-seven days of four hours each: the length of time was therefore much longer in appearance than in reality: the case of an election had once taken up ninety days. He disclaimed all personal motives. He had been up to that time ten years engaged in this business, and he asked was there ever such a proceeding heard of, as a man engaging in ten years of the most arduous labour, and still being eager to persevere with it after the ten years had expired, merely for the pleasure of calumniating innocence and enjoying the triumph of unprovoked malignity? He must be that monster, if the assertions of the opponents of the prosecution were to be believed; and there must be twenty such monsters in existence, his brother Managers, though men hitherto considered remarkable for their temper and humanity. He carried back the history of impeachments to the time of Richard II., examining with much perspicuity and inge-

nuity the different cases as they arose, vindicating the claims that had been set up and been denied, to proceed unfettered by the ordinary rules of evidence and the proceedings of the ordinary courts of law. He solemnly protested against any retractation of the charges ; but still, he said, found it necessary to submit to circumstances, which imposed their iron law upon all mankind. He had to move a resolution for the limitation of the impeachment ; since, in the fixed and unalterable course of human affairs, it had pleased God to decree that injustice should be rapid and justice slow. The motion was to the effect that, in consideration of the length of time already elapsed since the impeachment had been depending, it was proper to proceed only with the charges in which the Managers had already closed their evidence ; with the exception of those portions of the prosecution relating to contracts, pensions, and allowances.\*

The motion produced a long discussion. All the friends of Hastings rallied to the rescue. One Member moved an amendment to omit the exceptions ; another against continuing the impeachment at all ; and another the adjournment of the House. Separate divisions were taken on each amendment. The enemies of the prosecution were beaten on every point. Supported by Pitt and Dundas, Burke's resolution was at length put, and carried without a division.†

During the progress of these discussions, the Lords had still prudently maintained that silence which to Burke appeared so portentous when the session began. But the decision of the House of Commons, pronounced so deliberately by great majorities and under the direc-

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iii. pp. 525-39.

† Parl. Hist., vol. xxviii. p. 1225.

tion of the leaders of both sides of the House, left the hereditary legislators, whatever might be their private sentiments, no choice but to give way. They indeed went through the formality of long debate, as the Commons before them had done; but the business was finally settled, and the principle that an impeachment by the Commons was not abated by a dissolution, fully established, in the middle of May, when their Lordships, saying nothing why they had not sent a message to the same effect at a much earlier period of the session, condescended to inform the Commons that they were ready to proceed with the trial of Warren Hastings, Esq. On the twenty-third of the same month, the fourth article was ably opened by Mr. St. John; the evidence in support of it was heard, and the business of the prosecution was, according to the resolution Burke had proposed and carried in February, brought in five sittings to its period.

This must have afforded a sensation of relief. The length and labour of the trial were not the only circumstances which at last rendered the impeachment an unpleasant undertaking. The stormy altercations which occurred between Burke and the counsel for the prosecution, were not the most painful scenes that Westminster Hall afforded. Alas! just before the Lords had thought fit to proceed again with the trial that May, the violent rupture of the friendship between Fox and Burke had occurred, and the leader of the impeachment was at last as much separated from that Charles whom he had known, loved, and counselled almost from boyhood, as from Erskine and Sheridan. Windham still stood faithfully, affectionately, and reverently at Burke's side. But it was painful for Burke, Fox, and Sheridan to be obliged to meet in the same Managers' box together, and with

studied coldness and formal politeness to consult each other on the protracted business in which the public and many of their supporters had lost so much interest. Revolutions in kingdoms had been followed by revolutions in friendship, neither of which had been foreseen, when, in the dim February days of 1788, Burke had, with so much energy and determination, impeached Hastings in the name of the Commons of England, and made the rafters of the old Hall reverberate with his eloquent denunciations of tyranny and oppression. The once joyous Managers' box, where those political friends loved to congregate proudly and happily, had become a centre in which men whose tendencies were decidedly centrifugal, were, by the force of circumstances, brought for some hours in contact together, with anger, vexation, and enmity in their hearts. They met with reluctance, they separated with gladness. Hastings might rejoice. He had his revenge.

Ever since the publication of the Reflections, Burke's relations with the advanced section of the party had become more peculiar and exceptionable. It was evident that such a state of things could not continue. The discussion on the state of the impeachment only postponed what was fast growing inevitable. So far from seeing any reason to change the opinions he had avowed on the Revolution, every day, as the condition of France became more electrical, as the soldiers were in almost open revolt, and military subordination seemed at an end; as the more moderate constitutionalists were evidently losing ground, and everything tending to a republic, civil war, or anarchy; as the life of the Queen was threatened, and the clergy as well as the nobility were deprived of all the possessions they had enjoyed through ages, he



became more convinced of the correctness of his views, and of the serious nature of his apprehensions for the fate of France and of all established society.

Though far from being a vain man, perhaps a little human vanity, against which even the greatest minds are not always proof, had its share in impelling his energies in the direction they had permanently taken. To be told by courtiers and ministers, and by nearly all the crowned heads of Europe, that he was the saviour of royalty in this its hour of crisis, and to feel that the title was in some measure deserved ; and, above all, to have privately conveyed him the thanks of even the suffering Marie Antoinette herself, who was to him more worthy of homage in her virtual captivity than when she was at the summit of her royal elevation, were fascinating but dangerous honours. Perhaps he might save Europe. Perhaps he, a mere English commoner, without title, rank, or office, might save the French monarchy. Perhaps he might, at least, save the lofty Queen of France, the illustrious daughter of Maria Theresa, the august descendant from such a long line of Emperors. While at Beaconsfield, at the beginning of the year, he sent two letters to one of her confidential ladies of honour, in answer to communications made to himself conveying Marie Antoinette's grateful acknowledgments for what he had so eloquently written in her cause. He ventured most respectfully to give advice, which the Queen certainly did not follow. The secret understanding with Mirabeau he would not have approved. He wished above all that a language of reserve should be employed, and that no sentimental professions of adhesion to the new order of things should be indulged in, since they discouraged those who were attached to the Monarchy, and neither deceived nor con-

ciliated those who were plotting its ruin. The Queen's great fault was a love of underhand intrigue. Burke was, in the most respectful manner, anxious to caution her against it; but he found, and was obliged at last to confess with sorrow, that his caution was entirely thrown away.\*

It is remarkable that in those letters to the persons in the confidence of the Queen of France, as well as in all his correspondence and his published writings, he makes little difference between those who were called Moderate Constitutionals, such as Bailly and Lafayette, and the politicians on the left side of the National Assembly, who, in the season of general distrust, with reports of a meditated foreign invasion and of the contemplated flight of the Royal Family to the Austrian frontier, were gradually rising in importance. He never expected good to arise from the moderate section of the National Assembly. He saw already that the more democratic politicians were superior in directness of view to those who wished to keep well with the respectable classes, and that they would ultimately become their superiors.

For Mirabeau, who was rapidly sinking under the life of labour and excitement of the last two years, and yet who, in those last few weeks of his career, could stormily silence, with all his natural intrepidity, the thirty voices on his left, Burke felt nothing but detestation. The resolute Abbé Maury, carrying pistols in his pockets to protect him from popular violence, as he was struggling to the last for the French Monarchy in the National Assembly, sent Burke his thanks for what he had done in the same cause, and intimated that, as things were gradually growing worse and worse, he, like so

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. pp. 186-98.

many other French emigrants, might soon partake of the English statesman's hospitality at Beaconsfield. Burke, writing in reply, through a common friend, said: "Be pleased to express my sorrow that the mediocrity of my situation, and the very bad French which I speak, will neither of them suffer me to entertain the Abbé with the distinction I should wish to show him. I will do the best I can. I have had the Count de Mirabeau in my house; will he submit afterwards to enter under the same roof? I will have it purified and expiated, and I shall look into the best formulas, from the time of Homer downwards, for that purpose. I will do everything but imitate the Spaniard, who burned his house because the Connétable de Bourbon had been lodged in it. That ceremony is too expensive for my finances. Anything else I shall readily submit to for its purification; for I am extremely superstitious, and think his coming into it was of evil augury—worse a great deal than the crows which the Abbé will find continually flying about me."\*

In a similar spirit, in the month of February, when this was written, Burke published another long letter on French affairs, addressed to a member of the National Assembly. It had been suggested by some strictures which his correspondent, one of the defenders of the Monarchy, had passed on certain passages of the *Reflections*, and was, in fact, a brilliant supplement to the work which had become so famous. The powerful character of Rousseau, who is drawn as the philosopher of vanity, and the critical observations on the tendency of his life and works, were highly admired for their depth and originality. They were pronounced not inferior to anything that ever came from Burke's pen; and even in-

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 199.

spired with rapture the cynical Horace Walpole, whose age and infirmities rendered him almost a recluse, but who had had excellent opportunities for judging the career of Jean Jacques.\* But the Letter to a Member of the National Assembly, is chiefly remarkable for containing Burke's opinions on the likelihood of a counter-revolution, and on the restoration of the French Monarchy. He shows that the example of General Monk would not apply to France; that the French army was a very different body from the stern Puritans who crossed the Tweed, and under Monk's leadership contributed to seat our Charles II. on the throne of his ancestors; that the state in which England was left on the death of Cromwell was not so thoroughly revolutionary as France in 1791; and that little was to be expected in favour of the French monarchy from the operation of any internal causes. Written early in 1791, while Burke was still at Beaconsfield, apparently so fully occupied with the impeachment of Hastings, it indicates that his opinions on the French Revolution had taken another step in advance, and that he had begun to look for foreign aid as the only means of setting up again the French monarchy and the old institutions, which were at length all levelled with the dust.

This Letter to a Member of the National Assembly was almost as much read as the Reflections. It of course annoyed Fox, Sheridan, Erskine, and Grey, as much as the eloquent masterpiece it explained and defended. The leader of the Whig Opposition still believed the French Revolution a blessing to France, and even thought highly of the French Constitution which the great political mechanics of the National Assembly had

\* Walpole's Collected Correspondence, vol. ix. p. 320.

been so many months engaged in fabricating, and which they were in the summer of this year finally to complete, at the time when it began already to be evident that it was a mere theoretical scheme, and would not work at all in practice. Burke's successive publications appear to have awakened in Fox a spirit of antagonism. A Bill repealing and modifying some portion of the celebrated Quebec Bill, which had been passed at the beginning of the American war, was introduced by Pitt in the middle of the session. In one stage of its progress, Fox, directly alluding to the French Revolution, hoped that in framing a scheme of Government for what had formerly been a French province, the Minister would keep in view those enlightened principles of freedom which were making such a rapid progress round the world, and daily hastening to be universal.\*

Little anticipating, as on a former discussion, that allusions to the French Revolution would be made, Burke was not in his place when Fox addressed the House. Being satisfied with what he had done by his pen, he was not at all desirous to bring the subject forward for altercation in Parliament. But Fox, on the other hand, seemed to have made up his mind at length to give free expression to his opposite sentiments in the House of Commons. The English Government had recently interfered, and interfered not unwisely, in the war waged by Russia against the Porte. Fox had, however, taken decidedly the part of Russia, and on the fifteenth of April vehemently condemned the Ocsakow negotiations. Between those diplomatic transactions, good or bad as they might be, and the French Revolution, there was but little analogy; yet in his speech on this subject

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxix. p. 105.

he again introduced the French Revolution, praising the Government that had been established, and even going so far as to declare that, though different men might entertain different opinions about it, he at least regarded the new French Constitution as the most stupendous and glorious edifice of liberty which had been erected on the foundation of human integrity, in any time and in any country.

Such declarations Burke construed into a direct defiance. He rose, deeply agitated, immediately after Fox had concluded. Seeing Burke's emotion, and suspecting his intention of opposing their leader's sentiments, Fox's friends shouted out loudly, Question! Question! and prevented the author of the *Reflections* from being heard at all. He was compelled again to sit down; and the division being immediately called for, he had to bury his resentment within his own breast. In the most candid account of this, and the painful scenes which followed, carefully published in the *Annual Register*, it is stated that Fox himself regretted that his friends had hindered Burke from speaking, as, though the dispute might have been warm at the moment, it would not have left those rankling remembrances behind which all who knew Burke must have known that he was sure to entertain.\* In fact those gentlemen who called themselves Fox's friends, but who had entered public life long after his friendship with Burke had been established, by their imprudent eagerness in their leader's cause did both himself and their party irreparable mischief.

Four days afterwards the Quebec Bill was to be re-committed. On the afternoon for the business, Fox, expecting of course that Burke would take that opportu-

\* *Annual Register*, 1791. p 114.

nity for maintaining personally, in the face of the House of Commons, the opinions he had written in his study on the Revolution, called upon him to try whether the public rupture might not be warded off. It was long since he had entered Burke's doors, and it was the last time that he was ever to meet at home him who had been, for more than two-and-twenty years, his guide, philosopher, and friend. Some expressions were said to have fallen from the King, to the effect that he was not wedded to Mr. Pitt, and that if he thought Fox could carry on the Government in a more satisfactory manner, his Majesty would not consider himself precluded from sending for the Whig leader. Fox eagerly communicated this rumour to Burke, in the hope that it might induce him to forgo his intention of bringing the controversial topic of the French Revolution into the debate of that evening. It is more than probable that George III. never used any such expressions as had been imputed to him; it is certain that if he did, they had not the political significance Fox supposed them to possess. George III., whatever might be his feelings towards Burke individually, had, up to the session of 1791, in no degree abated his enmity towards Fox and the Whig party; and the ardent statesman's recent panegyric on the French Revolution had not rendered him in any respect more acceptable to a sovereign whose opinions on that subject, as on most subjects, were of a very decided nature. Burke thought the report of little value; he was besides not at all inclined to remain silent about the French Revolution. Why, thought he, should he be expected to do so? If his friend, knowing, as he did, how much he disagreed with him on the matter, had not felt himself precluded from panegyricizing France

and her new Constitution, in a debate on this very Quebec Bill, why should he be asked to keep his opinions on the same subject out of the discussion? Burke candidly opened to Fox the different heads of the arguments he intended to use; and the Whig leader, though he made no secret of his dissent from them, never intimated that they had nothing to do with the Bill then under consideration. How indeed could he do so with any propriety? Fox had himself been the first to introduce the subject of the French Revolution into the debate on this identical measure.

The two friends, so speedily to become adversaries, walked down to the House of Commons together, conversing, but not agreeing, on their way. Burke found that steps had already been again taken to prevent him from speaking. Sheridan, whose object was certainly not conciliation, had moved that further progress with the Bill should be postponed until after the Easter holidays, which were then imminent. Nor was this all. Another of Fox's friends, Michael Angelo Taylor, while intimating that the business had been improperly treated by Fox, who had introduced general principles of government into the discussion, gave notice that should the Minister or any other right honourable gentleman follow the example set by his own friend and political leader, he would call him to order, and even divide the House on the propriety of bringing forward such topics on such an occasion. Fox rose, as he said, to explain. His allusions respecting the French Revolution, in which he gently admitted he might have perhaps too often indulged, had been misunderstood. He was not, however, accustomed to conceal his thoughts; but he had never advanced any republican principles, nor would he ever



be backward in delivering his opinions. Fox may have meant to be conciliating ; yet the conclusion of his speech was regarded as a direct challenge to Burke. Powis, the upright and the high-minded, advised Fox to write, as Burke had done, on the French Revolution, rather than be continually speaking upon it in the House of Commons.\*

Though the final rupture of the friendship between the two statesmen has been so frequently ascribed to Burke's violence and intemperance, he had not yet spoken once during the session on the French Revolution. In the preceding year, and now in that immediately following, he was called up by Fox. He contented himself on this evening in stating the fact as it really was ; and, while regretting that he had on a former occasion been prevented by Fox's friends from attempting to answer his panegyric on the French Revolution, acquitted him of all personal offence in that painful proceeding. He said that Fox's friendship was dear to him ; but his country was still dearer.

Thus stood the matter on the adjournment for the Easter holidays. Delay only made the matter worse. Burke, still prevented from speaking, went down to Beaconsfield to ruminate on all that had occurred ; and his ruminations were not likely to be agreeable. A sense of illiberal and unfair treatment by the leader and many of the members of that party to which he had, from his first entrance into political life, been unswervingly devoted, had taken full possession of his mind ; and conscious that he had written nothing respecting the folly and mischief of the proceedings in France that time would not abundantly ratify, his bosom swelled with an

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxix. p. 361.

indignant sense of independence. He would take his own course, come what might.

The sixth of May arrived. On that day the Quebec Bill was again brought on. As soon as the Chair was taken, and the usual question was put, Burke, amid general silence and attentive expectation, stood up to speak. The inevitable hour had at last come. He began by alluding to the Rights of Man as unfitted to be the foundation of a government for the Canadians or any other people. Contrasting the conduct of the colonists during the American Revolution, which he praised, and that of the citizens of Paris in the French Revolution, which he condemned, he related how the King had been stopped by the populace when he wished to leave Paris for St. Cloud. Burke was summarily brought up in the midst of his narrative by a loud call to order from William Baker, who sat behind him, and had formerly regarded him as an oracle of wisdom and patriotism. Fox interposed, and made some remarks which, whatever might have been his intention, could only widen the breach between him and Burke. His right honourable friend, he said ironically, could scarcely be called out of order; this was a day of privilege, when any Member might abuse any government he pleased. Fox declared that it was just as fitting on such an occasion to talk of the Government of Turkey, of the Gentoos, of China, or of the laws of Confucius, as of what had occurred in France. Every gentleman, Fox again repeated, had, on that day, a right, with his friend Mr. Burke, to abuse any government, ancient or modern, as much as he pleased, and in the grossest terms he might think proper to use.\*

Language more likely to irritate a man of Burke's

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxix. p. 373.

temper could not have been employed. It certainly did provoke him to the utmost. "My right honourable friend," he said, "accuses me of abusing governments in very gross terms. I conceive my right honourable friend means to abuse me in very unqualified terms." In defending the course he had taken, he declared that he would suffer neither friend nor foe to come between him and his argument and thus make him a railer. He was again called to order by Mr. St. John, one of his brother managers in the impeachment of Hastings; and he was asked to appoint a day for discussing the mischiefs of the French Constitution as applicable to the English Constitution. Burke resumed, declaring that he would take the sense of the House as to whether he was or was not in order. He only delivered two or three more sentences before general shouts of Order! Order! arose from Fox's supporters around him; and they were met by equally loud and still more numerous cries of Go on! Go on! from the Ministerial side of the House. "I have sat," said Burke, "six-and-twenty years in this House, and I have never called any one to order in my life." While saying that it was a question of prudence for him to consider whether he should bring on the question of the French Revolution as a direct subject for discussion, but that it was undoubtedly the duty of every wise man and good citizen to discountenance evil designs, and when the approach of danger was seen, to endeavour to avert it, he was interrupted by cries of Chair! Chair! which in their turn drew from the opposite ranks calls of Hear! Hear! Burke, with something of the pathos of Lear, quoted the lines:—

"The little dogs and all,  
Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart, see they bark at me." \*

\* Pellew's Life of Lord Sidmouth, vol. i. p. 85.

Another of his colleagues in the impeachment, Mr. Anstruther, again called him to order. Hardly had the orator time to complain of the want of candour with which he was treated by his friends, when Mr. St. John once more rose and affirmed that if Burke continued his irregular observations, he would take the opinion of the House on his conduct. "An attempt is now made," replied Burke, "by one who has formerly been my friend, to bring down upon me the censure of the House. It is very unfortunate for me that I am sometimes hunted by one party and sometimes by another." He stated that if the tumult of order abated, he would give an account of the horrible and nefarious consequences which flowed from the French ideas of the Rights of Man. Gibbon's friend, Lord Sheffield, declaring that he was at last convinced Burke was out of order, formally moved, "That dissertations on the French Constitution and to read a narrative of the transactions in France are not regular or orderly on the question that the clauses of the Quebec Bill be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph." This motion, that from the language in which it was couched, was in itself an insult, was seconded in a long speech by Fox, who had himself introduced the subject of the French Revolution into the former debate on this very Quebec Bill.

Fox was rightly considered a thoroughly good-natured man. But some of the observations he then let fall were anything but good-natured to one whose friendship he still professed to desire. Assuredly the last fault which an enemy of Burke will find with his writings on the French Revolution, or on any political question, is ignorance. Whatever might be his errors, whatever might be his impetuosity, his industry in acquiring knowledge on all the great subjects on which he wrote, has generally been

allowed ; and he has, almost without a dissentient voice, been justly regarded as the best-informed statesman of any time. Yet Fox, who had only lately acknowledged in the same place that he had learnt more from Burke than from all the books he had ever read, now accused his preceptor of the grossest ignorance of France and of the French Revolution. "Minute discussion," said he, "of great events without information, did no honour to the pen that wrote or the tongue that spoke the words." This was going far : but Fox even went further. One of the most beautiful sentences that ever came from Burke, referred to the unfairness of condemning men by general descriptions and in the mass, like the Americans during their war of independence, or the Catholics in their efforts to obtain political freedom. "I do not know," he had remarked, "how to draw up a bill of indictment against a whole people." Fox, using Burke's own words, accused him of drawing up a bill of indictment against the whole people of France. He did more. With some expressions of kindness and compunction in the course of his speech, the tenor of his observations went to fix upon Burke a charge of the wildest extravagance and the most flagrant inconsistency. Private conversations were reported. Even jokes and playful expressions were all pressed into the service, in order to make his conduct appear the more contradictory and unwarrantable from his previous career.\*

Whether Burke, with all his vehemence, may have, up to this time, contemplated breaking entirely with Fox, may be a question. This speech, however, filled up the measure of his indignation. He rose to reply, and it was evident from his manner that he had come to a determi-

\* Fox's Speeches, vol. iv. p. 15.

nation. He looked grave, and almost sad ; the tones of his voice were measured and subdued. He said that though he had himself been so frequently called to order, yet he had sat with perfect composure while a personal attack was made upon him in the most disorderly speech he had ever heard. He had been treated in a manner which did little justice to the feelings or even to the appearance of decency. On the facts of which he was in possession, he was willing to meet his assailant hand to hand and foot to foot. He defended the course he had taken on the Quebec Bill, and declared that, though Fox had complained of it in public, he had not objected to it in private during the last confidential interview they had held together. While Burke was speaking, Fox withdrew to the lobby, and more than twenty of his friends, supposing that in compliance with an intimation he had given that he should leave the House if Burke were allowed to discuss the French Revolution, rose, and in a very disorderly manner followed him to the door. Seeing this demonstration, Burke let fall one sarcastic observation, which gave great offence, and for which he was called to order by Charles Grey. "In carrying on the attack against me, the right honourable gentleman has been supported by a corps of well-disciplined troops, expert in their manœuvres and obedient to the word of their commander." Fox, however, again entered the House with an orange in his hand, and the gentlemen who had been so ready to follow him were compelled, looking very foolish, to return to their seats.\* Burke did not need such an incident to convince him that he was no longer to expect kindness or consideration from many of those with whom he had so long been in intimate

\* Annual Register, 1791, p. 126.

political connection. "The right honourable gentleman and I," he observed, "have differed on many other questions, such as Parliamentary Reform, the Dissenters' Relief Bill, and the Marriage Act, and yet no difference of opinion has led for one moment to any loss of friendship. It may be indiscreet in me at my time of life to provoke enemies, and give occasion to friends to desert me; yet if my firm adherence to the British Constitution places me in such a dilemma, I shall risk all, and, as public duty and public prudence teach me, with my last words exclaim, 'Fly from the French Constitution!'" "There is no loss of friends," whispered Fox. Burke for a moment paused; and then added, "Yes, there is a loss of friends; I know the price of my conduct: I have done my duty at the expense of my friend. Our friendship is at an end." He concluded by exhorting Pitt and Fox, whether they soared as flaming meteors in different political hemispheres, or as brethren walked hand in hand together, to save the British Constitution from the new theories; and moved an amendment to Lord Sheffield's motion, to the effect that dissertations on the French Constitution were quite as inappropriate as any allusions to the English Constitution on the question that the clauses of the Quebec Bill be read paragraph by paragraph.\* Having thus formally abjured Fox's friendship, and publicly separated himself from those with whom he had so long acted, Burke, as soon as he had finished his speech, rose again, and, to the surprise of both sides, walked directly across the floor of the House, and squeezed himself in between Pitt and Dundas on the Treasury Bench.†

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iv. p. 15.

† Wraxall's Post. Mem., vol. iii.

Fox again attempted to speak. But tears streamed down his face, and he seemed so much overcome by his emotion, that for some minutes he was quite unable to address the House. The whole assembly was deeply affected. A great statesman, the leader of the Opposition, weeping in the House of Commons at the loss of an intimate personal and political friendship ; who could behold such a spectacle unmoved ? Fox shedding tears, while Burke looked stern, hard, and unbending, affected the feelings, and made many persons forget the provocation that had been given. None could say that Burke had been the aggressor in the quarrel. Few could say that he was not justified in disclaiming openly a friendship which, as he justly said, had allowed him to be interrupted and not permitted him to explain, and saw him accused without suffering him to be heard in his defence. Fox's tears redeemed his character as a man of the kindest, gentlest, and simplest nature. Yet even after this display of sensibility, words fell from him scarcely consistent with so tender a manifestation. He again complained that Burke had taken the occasion of the Committee on the Quebec Bill to deliver his sentiments on the French Revolution. He accused the Minister of designedly wishing to make him pass for a Republican, and Burke of lending himself to strengthen that misrepresentation. He even intimated his belief that Burke's conduct sprang from an intention to injure him, and that he wished to enforce upon him a political test which no man of honour would submit to take. Burke had even heaped upon him the most ignominious terms. At this declaration Burke said, " I do not recollect having used any." Fox rejoined, " My right honourable friend does not recollect the epithets ; they are out of his mind : then they are completely and



for ever out of mine. I cannot cherish a recollection so painful, and from this moment they are obliterated and forgotten." Though not one offensive epithet will be found up to this period in Burke's reported speeches on this memorable evening, and his language appears in every respect to correspond with his assertion that no such words had been by him employed, Fox's ready acceptance of Burke's declaration, passed among the Whig leader's admirers for great candour and generosity. But before he sat down, Fox again complained that his friend had used him in a cruel and hard manner, and declared that he would keep out of his way until time and reflection should make him think differently upon the subject, when, if their common friends should not contrive to bring them together again, he would not think that they had done what they had both reason to expect. Saying that he would make no further reply, Fox then sat down.\*

Again Burke stood up. He remarked that the sensibility Fox displayed at the beginning and the end of his speech, was quite effaced by what occurred in the middle. Under the mask of friendship a new attack had been made upon him ; his lightest sayings had been brought up against him, and the proceedings of the whole of his life had been studiously misrepresented. Could the most inveterate enemy act more unkindly? Burke defended his conduct during the American war, and challenged his accusers to prove, by one specific instance, any inconsistency between the *Reflections on the French Revolution* and all his former writings and speeches. He declared the French Constitution, which Fox had maintained to be such a noble specimen of political architecture, to be a building composed of untempered mortar, the work of

\* Fox's Speeches, vol. iv. p. 220.

Goths and Vandals, in which everything was disjointed and inverted. Fox had said that he did not love tests. Did he not know that in France, where he had argued that the greatest amount of religious liberty prevailed, there was the most tyrannical intolerance, that the nuns had been treated in the most shocking manner because the priests from whom they received the sacrament had not submitted to the test that had been imposed? The new constitution had been actually tried, and found to be only productive of evil. Burke, in conclusion, said that he was sorry for what had occurred. Sufficient for the day was the evil thereof. But he would certainly not barter away the constitution of his country for a wild and visionary system, which could only lead to confusion and disorder; and he did not like professions of friendship when, as in the present instance, his conduct and character had been so materially attacked.\*

Pitt then rose. He observed very justly that the House was in a singular situation with regard to the Quebec Bill. He defended Burke, declaring that even at the first he had not been at all out of order, and hoped that Lord Sheffield would withdraw the motion he had proposed. It had indeed done its work, and was accordingly withdrawn. Lord Sheffield himself was shortly afterwards to leave Fox even with contumely, and, as the horizon darkened, adopt Burke's views on the tendency of the French Revolution.† The Chairman reported progress; and the House adjourned without any further proceedings with respect to the Quebec Bill.

As the House broke up that night it rained hard. Being without a carriage, and there being at that time

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iv. p. 24.

† See Parl. Hist. vol. xxx. p. 81.

not the extensive congregation of cabs which now daily and nightly stand in Palace Yard, Burke asked one of his own party, Mr. Curwen, to set him down. Scarcely had the orator taken his seat in the vehicle, before he began congratulating him on not having been led away by the fashionable doctrines which Fox and Sheridan had so eagerly embraced. Mr. Curwen listened to those compliments for some time without saying a word, but at last, finding that silence would imply assent, he intimated his concurrence with Fox in some of the opinions respecting the French Revolution, and expressed his hopes that liberty would triumph all over the world. At this confession, Burke became highly excited, and seizing hold of the check-string, exclaimed with great surprise, "You are of these people! Set me down." They had • reached Charing Cross. The rain poured down in torrents. Yet it was with some difficulty, Mr. Curwen afterwards remarked, that he succeeded in keeping Burke in the carriage until he reached his own door, which was then, however, not as the relator of the anecdote asserts, in Gerrard Street, Soho, but in Duke Street, St. James'. Burke was, perhaps, too angry to tell his friend that he had driven him to a former residence instead of to the one he then occupied. He said nothing more; but as soon as the carriage stopped, jumped out, and parted without saying a single word.\*

He had, however, good reason for being indignant with "these people," as he called his old associates on the Opposition benches. Not satisfied with rudely interrupting him in the House of Commons, they set to work to calumniate him through the press. What was only darkly hinted in the debate, had previously been openly ex-

\* Curwen's *Observations on the State of Ireland*, vol. ii. p. 93.

pressed in the columns of one of the Opposition newspapers.\* This paper assured its Whig readers that a malignant conspiracy had been brought to light. It shrieked loudly that a Plot! A Plot! had been discovered. Yes! All should now come out. Burke was the wicked instrument of the Ministers, who at the moment when George III. was just beginning to turn kindly to Fox, and had let fall some gracious expressions in his favour, had stimulated him to make his old friend and political leader pass for a Republican. Fox's frankness and ingenuousness were to be imposed on. An ardent mind was, by declamation against the French Revolution, to be led on to avow republican sentiments, and the Sovereign again more deeply prejudiced against the Whig leader. After the quarrel this accusation assumed greater proportions. Perhaps Burke wished to be the Prime Minister or leader of the House of Commons himself. Perhaps he only wished to keep Mr. Pitt in power. But on either supposition, one of which was of course a certainty, his infamy was great. What treachery to his friend! What ingratitude to his party, which had done so much for him! So the able editors of the Argus and the Morning Chronicle reasoned, and so many of the gentlemen who interrupted Burke and deprecated the discussion affected to believe. It was to no purpose that Burke's whole life was utterly inconsistent with the ridiculous idea of his ever rendering himself the agent of such a mean intrigue. It was to no purpose that, as he had himself shown, he did not introduce the French Revolution into the recent debates. It was to no purpose that it was evident, if Fox did not wish to pass for a Republican, and wished to counteract such an impression, the

\* The Argus, April 22, 1791.

very debate of which his friends complained gave him the opportunity of publicly showing that his opinions were not republican. Such considerations passed for nothing. Sheridan and Fox's companions shook their heads. All was very black. The best thing that Mr. Burke could do to retrieve his own honour, was at once to take himself off from the political scene, and by retiring from Parliament altogether, remove this element of discord from out of the path of wiser, more consistent, and higher principled Whigs. It was stated at Brookes's that sentence had gone forth against Burke. The priceless acquisition of Mr. Fox's friendship was withdrawn from him. He was a lost man. He was no longer to be regarded as a member of the Whig party. Their ranks were purified: sufficient virtue had been found among them to cast forth the traitor from their body. All these rumours were of course communicated to Burke and, on the eleventh of May, when the adjourned committee on the Quebec Bill was to be renewed, were not calculated to diminish the sense of injury he so keenly felt.

Had Fox really discountenanced the accusation that Burke wished to make him appear a Republican, it would have been more to his credit. But under the influence of his flatterers and supporters, he for a time seems actually to have believed the charge. He took the opportunity of the debate on the eleventh of May to declare himself in favour of aristocratic institutions, and, though he objected to the Legislative Council of the Ministerial Bill, evinced a strong desire to prove that his sentiments were anything but republican. In fact, Fox's speech on this occasion was one of the most aristocratic speeches ever made in Parliament; and it has been es-

pecially praised by the select members of the Whig aristocracy, as containing the philosophy of their order.\* Pitt expressed himself highly satisfied with Fox's declarations, and hoped that he might have the aid of his rival's eloquence and talents in defence of the Constitution.

Burke had personally, however, little reason to be satisfied with Fox's speech. The anxiety the Whig leader had shown to clear himself from the charge of being a Republican, seemed to reflect directly upon his old friend, whose conduct it was very plainly implied had rendered such a defence necessary. He rose and said that he hoped the House would not countenance a most insidious design to ruin him and crown his age with infamy. Sentence of banishment had been pronounced against him by his party ; but during the short time he remained a Member of Parliament, he had at least reason to expect a fair, manly, and open hostility. If he attempted to show that Fox's objections to the Legislative Council, in the Bill then under consideration, were too democratic, he would be supposed to be actuated by a base premeditated artifice to make his friend pass for a Republican. This design, which had at first been conveyed to him as a secret, was, he said, immediately afterwards announced in a public journal. Burke read the passage in the daily newspaper containing the accusation. Scarcely however had he done so, when Michael Angelo Taylor rose again to call him to order ; but this officious gentleman was prevented by his friends around him from renewing the annoyance of the former evening. Burke declared that he had a right to be heard in answer to such base imputations. He defended himself powerfully, and indeed unanswerably.

\* Fox's Speeches, vol. iv. p. 228 : Lord John Russell's Life of Fox, vol. ii. p. 266.

As he reviewed his former life, and related the circumstances in which the friendship began that had so painfully terminated, there was a mournful pathos in his observations. "I complain," he said, "of being obliged to stand upon my defence by the right honourable gentleman, who, when a young man, was brought to me, and evinced the most promising talents, which I used my best endeavours to cultivate; and this man, who has arrived at the maturity of being the most brilliant and powerful debater that ever existed, has described me as having deserted and abandoned every one of my principles!" Still he had only done his duty. Let not the party that had excommunicated him imagine he was deprived of all consolation. Darkness and solitude might reign without; but there was comfort and sunshine within.\*

Fox rose again; but not to conciliate nor to soothe. He no longer called Burke his right honourable friend; it was "the right honourable gentleman." He declared that he loved the British Constitution as much as any one, but did not like to make upon it fulsome and unnecessary panegyrics; and compared himself to Cordelia, whose love of the aged king was not less than that of her sisters, though she would not profess so much. With respect to what Burke had said about being separated from his party, Fox, in a patronizing and offensive tone, said that it was the right honourable gentleman's own choice. All he had to do was to repent, and his friends would be ready to receive him back, and love him as they had previously done. This declaration, which was in truth almost insulting, filled up the measure of Burke's wrath. He retorted that praises of the English Constitution were at least as useful as panegyrics on the French Revolution.

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iv. p. 28.

"Then," continued Burke, "I am told that if I repent, I am to be received back. But I stand as a man publicly disgraced by my party; and therefore the right honourable gentleman ought not to receive me again. I have gone through my youth without encountering any party disgrace, and though in my age I have been so unfortunate as to meet it, I do not solicit the right honourable gentleman's friendship, nor that of any man either on one side of the House or the other."\*

Nothing more was said. This friendship was at an end. Fox and Burke were henceforth politically separated, never again to unite; and the enmity then engendered against Burke by Fox's partisans, has continued up to the present time by those who profess to follow in his footsteps. It has even recently been declared by the most distinguished worshiper of Fox's memory, that Burke, in acting as he did with respect to the French Revolution, was smitten with absolute "insanity;" and that the loss of that inestimable privilege, Mr. Fox's friendship, Burke owed to his own "wilful intemperance." Such expressions deserve attention, as fair specimens of the magnanimity and liberality of the receding generation of Whigs, educated under the auspices of Holland House.†

They breathe the same spirit as Fox's organ, the *Morning Chronicle*, the day immediately following the debate of the eleventh of May. Putting into something of an official shape the reports which had been so indus-

\* *Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxix. p. 426.

† "The insanity of Mr. Burke."—Lord John Russell in his *Life of Fox*, vol. ii. And "The separation of Mr. Burke from his party was a natural consequence of the position he had assumed in his book. The breach of friendship with Mr. Fox was an effect of his own wilful intemperance."—*Ibid.*, p. 273.



triously disseminated ever since the dissension began, this newspaper declared in a style of great authority, that "The great and firm body of the Whigs of England, true to their principles, have decided on the dispute between Mr. Fox and Mr. Burke; and the former is declared to have maintained the pure doctrines by which they are bound together, and upon which they have invariably acted. The consequence is that Mr. Burke retires from Parliament." \* This announcement took the public, who were ignorant of the language held in Brookes', with surprise. By what authority, it was asked, was such an announcement made? Who had commissioned the Editor of the newspaper to speak in the name of "The great and firm body of the Whigs of England"? The newspaper professed to be Fox's organ: had he authorized the insertion of the paragraph? Though he knew that it had given great offence it is certain that neither he, nor any of his friends, however frequently called upon for an explanation, ever disavowed this extraordinary announcement.

From the tone of the Opposition newspapers, and the language used by Fox's partisans, it was evident that they considered Burke at their mercy. He had, in their opinion, to submit to whatever they pleased to dictate. They might call him to order, insult him, slander him, persecute him, dismiss him from their ranks, sit in judgment upon him, command him to retire at once from Parliament. He had been the real leader and director of the Whig party when most of them were children. His fame as an orator and statesman had been great in England for a generation. He had been the guide and instructor of Fox, when Fox was a schoolboy. But what

\* Morning Chronicle, May 12, 1791.

availed such considerations? He ought, at the pleasure of his assailants, at once to disappear from public life, and hide his grey hairs in silence and obscurity at Beaconsfield.

So some of these men evidently expected. But they calculated a little too sanguinely. Was it really, as the pompous paragraph of the *Morning Chronicle* announced, that Fox, in panegyricizing so extravagantly the French Revolution, had maintained the true principles of the Whig party, which had been formed long before that event had happened in the world? Was it true that the great and firm body of the Whigs of England were unanimous in ostracizing Burke from their connection? These questions he determined to try. He had studied politics more systematically than any man of his time. He knew something of what Whig principles had been when that party first became powerful in the State. He had read history. He had in former days talked with old men who had personally known some of the leading actors in the Revolution of 1688, and the proceedings which seated the Brunswick dynasty on the British throne. Accused as he had been, and treated as he had been, it could scarcely be a crime in him to defend himself; though an illustrious Whig statesman of the present day considers it as such.\*

With this object, very soon after the appearance of the paragraph in the *Morning Chronicle*, Burke set about writing *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*. He saw without repining, Fox appropriate his old Libel Bill, which he and Dowdeswell had striven to pass in 1771,

\* "Mr. Burke did not rest till he had estranged from Mr. Fox many of his best friends, and broken into fragments 'the great and firm body' of the English Whigs."—Lord John Russell, *Life of Fox*, vol. ii. p. 273.

and which, with some slight verbal alterations, principally putting it in a declaratory form, the Whig leader succeeded in carrying through Parliament, though Burke's former exertions in the cause were not acknowledged. He supported a measure granting some further relief to the Roman Catholics. He supported Charles Grey in a motion for a committee of inquiry into the effect of imprisonment for debt, declaring that, as it then existed, it was a great blemish in our law, and he brought forward arguments which, in the interest of commerce itself, would lead to its entire abolition. But after the *séparation* from his party he ceased to attend the House with his former regularity, and threw the whole force of his mind into the composition of the new work, which he felt that, in justice to himself, it was necessary to publish as soon as it could be sent through the press.

While he was engaged in this labour the Session came to an end. Mrs. Burke, suffering from her old complaint, rheumatism in the leg, was at this time seriously unwell, and she was recommended a change of air, and sea-water baths. Burke and the family in consequence went down to Margate, and it was there that the latter portion of the Appeal was written. Burke spent some weeks not unpleasantly. Mrs. Burke took warm and cold baths. The housekeeper, Mrs. Webster, bathed in the sea. Burke paced the sands regularly at low tide, composing many a weighty and eloquent paragraph of the Appeal. What thought the fashionable pleasure-seekers from London, at the then fashionable resort, as the earnest and careworn statesman passed by them, wrapped in meditation, his head bent upon the ground, and the waves of the Kentish coast breaking around his feet? He was thinking about other things than their little

vanities and flirtations ; though, as a true philosopher, interested in all relating to mankind, he could look even on the children playing on the sands, and the young ladies, deep in the mysteries of the Minerva press, with a kind and sympathizing eye. He even, it is said, went to the Assembly Rooms to see what were the fashionable colours ; and came back with a full and true account for the edification of Mrs. Burke and her niece ; but, as Mrs. Burke was a lady moving in the very best London society, it seems somewhat unlikely that she should be obliged to study the fashions at Margate, before making her appearance in the Assembly Rooms. It has been also said, that on going to church one Sunday morning, the clergyman, knowing that Burke was present, preached a political sermon, which, though entirely on his side of the question, so much offended him that he rose from his seat and almost interrupted the preacher, from his inveterate dislike to politics being introduced into the pulpit.\*

These anecdotes may or may not be true. But it is scarcely likely that Burke would be guilty of such an act of rudeness as to threaten to interrupt, in the pulpit, a preacher from whose political views he differed, much less one in whose sentiments he concurred. There are in existence, hitherto unpublished, some letters in Burke's own handwriting, exhibiting his pursuits while at Margate, and showing us his manner of correcting his proof-sheets as they were passing through the press, and how he was bringing out the Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs. These letters are addressed to a kind of clerk, or amanuensis, of the name of Swift, at that time employed in Richard Burke's chambers in Stone-buildings, Lincoln's Inn. As this young man wrote a

\* Prior, p. 343.





very neat hand, he was frequently employed to copy Burke's manuscripts before they were sent to the printer. He afterwards committed a sad breach of trust, and proved himself unworthy of the confidence Burke placed in him ; but the letters the statesman wrote to him, show how kind and familiar Burke was to the humblest dependants with whom he was thrown into any human relationship. The first letter begins :

“ Dear Swift,

“ Let page nine be cancelled, and the one inserted in its place, altered in the manner I send to you. I thank you for your attention and diligence. Richard will, please God, be in town tomorrow. Mrs. Burke has been three times in the warm bath and twice in the cold. Mrs. Webster, too, has bathed. The whole family is well, and give their service to you.

“ I am, yours, etc.,

“ EDMUND BURKE.”

This letter, which is printed, and on the outside bears the date of the thirteenth of July, was followed by another on the seventeenth, containing the title to the new work. Of it a facsimile has been engraved for the present work, and is not without some characteristics. It is, as usual, blotted, and the first title may be seen rubbed out by Burke's finger, and another, intended to be like print, substituted. In the postscript, Burke tells Swift that Mrs. Burke and Miss French desire to be remembered to you. But Miss French is, in the family, spoken of as “ Missy ;” and Burke, in sending her remembrances to his correspondent, had at first written “ Missy ;” but, thinking evidently the word a little too familiar, clumsily attempted, as may be seen, to destroy the *y*, and to write French

above it, so that "Missy" might be changed into Miss French. Swift is also told, if he has any doubt about the Latin quotations, to consult Richard Burke the elder, Dr. King, or Dr. Lawrence, all, in this season of cruel separation, good friends and true, deeply interested in the success of the new publication.

"Dear Swift,

"I thank you for your letter. I enclose you the corrected proofs. Considering the changes made, they are tolerably clear; so much so, that you need not send me the revise: your own careful inspection, I think, will do; but if you have any doubts, especially about the Latin, show the part you doubt about to my brother, or Dr. King, or Dr. Lawrence. That will be enough. But send me the sheets of the revise; but without waiting my sending them back.

"The Title, 'An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs, in consequence of some late discussions in Parliament relative to the Reflections on the French Revolution.'

"Yours ever,

"EDM. BURKE.

"Mrs. Burke and Miss French desire to be remembered to you; so does the family. Keep the present sheet E; I mean, don't destroy it; though of course it is to be altered as I have marked."

Two more letters follow on the same subject to the same correspondent. Burke writes as kindly and familiarly to the young man as to any noble lord or right honourable gentleman with whom he might have been associated in the highest walks of ambition. These letters, too, show the statesman, when at the height of



literary fame, as busy and anxious in sending his sheets through the press and making corrections and alterations as any young author with his first proofs. On July the twenty-seventh the book was really finished, and Burke writes :

“Dear Swift,

“I send you now conclusively the last sheets. You see I have made some additions ; but they are so clear that you may correct them yourself—the only word you are likely to mistake is ‘tactic.’ I have made a cancel of pp. 47–48. This, too, is distinct, and it makes the whole. By some strange mistake our letters that ought to have gone yesterday were put into a drawer, and do not go till this night.

“Yours ever,

“EDM. BURKE.”

On the fifth of August Burke had received a set of copies of the Appeal down at Margate. He was still as anxious and indefatigable as ever, contemplating other corrections, and ready to make more improvements. Again he writes to his son’s chambers in Stone-buildings :

“Dear Swift,

“I thank you for your attention to the work. I am sorry the edition was so large as two thousand. But if it should have any probability of getting to another, let me know it, as I wish to make a few corrections. Send me down three or four copies more. Send one from the author to Lord Mansfield, General Conway, and the French General, No. 6, Suffolk-street. The English General lives in Warwick-street, Charing Cross. The Duchess of Biron and the Countess Boufflers live at

Richmond. Send one to Mons. Caumartin, at Grenier's Hotel, Jermyn-street.

"Yours sincerely,

"EDM. BURKE."

These letters seem to me quite as important, as illustrations of Burke's private character, as those which he wrote to the Nagles in former years. If they have no political, they have much personal interest. The copyist, Swift, to whose breach of faith I shall have afterwards more particularly to allude, had, at his death, a number of similar letters in his possession. His wife, however, ignorant of their interest and importance, deliberately committed them to the flames, and the four here given are all that have been saved from destruction.\*

The work, the completion of which they record, has generally been ranked next to the Reflections, of which it is the defence. Being written in the third person, and apparently at least apologetic, it has about it an air of calmness and dignity well suited for the object it seeks to accomplish. It may be divided into three separate parts.

In the first Burke defends his recent conduct in the House of Commons. He enters into most interesting personal details of his connection with the party, relates circumstances and events which are peculiarly biographical, and triumphantly vindicates his consistency as being at all times in favour of that moderate freedom which could be united with order, stability, and all the great institutions of the land. Those who have most patiently studied his political career will most readily admit the correctness of his statements. The Rocking-

\* These letters I owe to the kindness of John Fillingham, Esq., of Hoxton, who allowed me to inspect and copy the originals.

ham Whigs, with whom Burke entered on public life, and on whose principles he steadily acted, were, as a class of politicians, very different from Sheridan, Erskine, Grey, and Fox, in the time of the French Revolution. Fox was most certainly ill-advised when he deliberately brought the charge of inconsistency against his old friend. It has been abandoned by those who dissent even most strongly from Burke's interpretation of the French Revolution. His life will have been studied to little purpose, if it be not found to confirm the claim he emphatically puts forth: "If he could venture to value himself upon anything, it is on the virtue of consistency that he would value himself the most. Strip him of this, and you leave him naked indeed."\*

Having fully demonstrated his consistency with himself, his next step is to show his consistency with the former generation of Whigs, in whose footsteps even Fox and his followers still professed to tread. Here, too, Burke's victory is easy and decisive. His principles might be good or bad, but they were as liberal at least as those of the Whigs who supported William of Orange, drew up the Declaration of Rights, and prosecuted Dr. Sacheverell for his sermon on passive obedience. Fox would not assent to this limitation of the old Whig doctrines. It is evident that his object in undertaking the history of that period, of which he was to leave a fragment, not very remarkable as a piece of historical composition, was indirectly to answer Burke. He sat down to write history as a debater; but this debating was quite out of place. Fox's book was an elaborate failure. Though Burke did not profess to write history, yet his pages on the English Revolution in the *Reflections* and in

\* Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.

the Appeal rank, both for brilliancy and philosophy, far beyond Fox's fragmentary sketch of the reign of James II. The energetic sentences in which the character of Sir Robert Walpole is drawn had the merit of being the first reversal of an ignorant verdict passed by popular prejudice on that skilful and moderate minister. It awoke a sentiment of gratitude in the heart of that statesman's son Horace, who, in his old-age and seclusion, read the Appeal with delight;\* and Macaulay in his epigrammatic, though harsh and totally unjust, article on the son, has closely followed Burke in doing justice to the father.† After quoting and commenting on the words of the Old Whigs, Burke contrasts their language with that of the great advocates of the French Revolution, and especially with this object quotes passages from Paine's Rights of Man, which, however, he neither directly names, nor condescends in the least to refute.

Advancing from details to generalities, he, in the third part of his Appeal, proceeds to answer a question at the basis of all political philosophy. No term was in general more vaguely and carelessly employed than the word "the people." What then constituted "a people"? Did it mean any number of men told by the head? It was sufficient with the lovers of revolutions to say, "The people willed it," to justify any change that might be made. But he most ably shows that the term people could only be properly used in an established society; that where there was a state of anarchy there could be no such thing as a people: and that in such a disorganization the men with a numerical majority had no right to bind a dissenting minority. Every paragraph of this

\* Horace Walpole's Collected Correspondence, vol. ix. p. 338.

† Macaulay's Article on Horace Walpole.

splendid dissertation is full of deep meaning, and will be found to apply just as directly to France of the present day as to the France of seventy years ago. Was this proclamation of the Rights of Man so new as had been supposed? Was this the first time that all men had been proclaimed equal? Burke shows that in the social insurrections even of what had been called the dark ages the same doctrines had been enunciated and acted upon by the leaders Ket and Jack Straw, in those popular outbreaks which have been so little understood by readers of history, and on which modern historians have thrown so few gleams of light. The conclusion of the whole Appeal, about the merits of the British Constitution, the allusion to Sir Joshua Reynolds and his criticisms on the fine arts, the picture of Montesquieu examining and comparing all the different governments which had been known in the world, the final avowal of the author's determination to be the last, if he were the least, of the race of men, who adhered to the political opinions which our ancestors had worshiped as revelations, rather than the first of those who would coin to themselves Whig principles from a French die, is written in the finest style of sustained, lofty, and fervid eloquence. Burke had never written anything superior to the splendid composition of this and the work of the preceding year. Amid the unprecedented convulsions of the time, his mind seemed to glow with increased fervour and strength, and to grow in Titanic energy and power with the progress of the mighty Revolution which it denounced.

The Reflections was of course addressed to all Europe. The Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs had, of course, a more limited object, being written more particularly for the members of the party with which Burke

had long acted, and intended as his vindication in their eyes as well as in those of that posterity which should happen to take an interest in the proceedings of his day. The work could scarcely be expected to be read so extensively as the *Reflections*. The first edition of two thousand copies was speedily exhausted ; and the book threw every other publication into the shade ; but it never attained the circulation and popularity of its great predecessor.

George III. however thought the *Appeal* even superior to the *Reflections*. Burke of course sent a copy to the King, and his Majesty returned a most gracious message, assuring the author of the great pleasure he had received in perusing the new work. The King had indeed become so much in love with Burke's writings, that they had induced him to regard with especial favour a work in which the Whigs of former days were held up to admiration ; and, though he had been taught to abhor the very name of Whig, and particularly to dislike the great Revolution families, his Majesty was softened. Those old Whigs whom he had so long regarded as unprincipled and selfish politicians, thinking only of their own family influence, and seeking to make their king a mere instrument in their hands, had some patriotism and foresight after all. In the season of Revolution, when thrones were tottering about the ears of their possessors, when abstract Rights of Man and the philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau were deliberately acted upon in a neighbouring country, when Louis XVI. was little better than a prisoner, and the immemorial French monarchy had become the sport of children and the butt of buffoons, even a Whig of 1688, with his talk about Declarations of Right, and contracts between sovereigns

and their people, was not so dangerous a politician as his Majesty had once been induced to believe. A Lord Rockingham or a Duke of Newcastle might sometimes have offended George III.'s prejudices; but those English noblemen, with Burke as the exponent of their principles, were reformers of a different stamp from a Robespierre or even a Mirabeau. The royal philosophy had received a rude shock. The pupil of Bolingbroke, and Bute, had never dreamed of a French Revolution. The most eloquent opponent of this great political movement had come, not from amongst the Tories, but out of those Whig ranks which the King had considered the organized embodiment of his political enemies. No wonder that his Majesty sent gracious messages to Burke; no wonder that when the statesman, according to the rules of official etiquette, appeared at the levee, or met his sovereign on the terrace at Windsor, George III. welcomed him with his most pleasing smile, and deigned to converse with him long, while many titled bystanders looked in vain for a Royal recognition.\*

George III. was not the only person in the British dominions who, after being perpetually opposed to Burke, had become one of his enthusiastic admirers. The veteran Earl Camden, who had been such a declared enemy of the Rockingham party, and who had formally enunciated some abstract dogmas on government not very dissimilar to those proclaimed in the Rights of Man, found himself, on reading Burke's Appeal, to be an earnest and orthodox Whig according to the creed there formally written down. In the most complimentary language he wrote to the author acknowledging himself to be his disciple.

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. *passim*.

Many of Burke's old friends still however maintained a significant silence. In their hearts they agreed with him, but they did not wish to commit their opinions to writing that they might not openly declare themselves against their leader, Fox. In private circles Lord Fitzwilliam loudly praised both the *Reflections* and the *Appeal*; the Duke of Portland was not behindhand in bearing a similar testimony; but still while any hopes remained of repairing the breach which threatened to be so disastrous to the Whig party, nothing was done either by them, or others on whose support Burke might have calculated, to give a public adhesion to the doctrines he had so splendidly asserted. Fox was himself of course much annoyed. Objectionable as every part of the *Reflections* appeared in his eyes, it was not an attack upon himself nor upon his principles. But there was no answering, there was no getting over the *Appeal*. It struck directly home; and in proportion as the vindication of Burke was triumphant, it rendered the defeat of his friend, who had become his opponent, the more decisive and ignominious.

Paine was again up in arms. Though he was not formally mentioned by name in the book, the quotations from his *Rights of Man*, and the significant intimation that the author would not in the slightest degree attempt to refute them, even if any refutation but that of criminal justice were necessary, naturally again brought him forward. The first portion of the *Rights of Man* had circulated by thousands; Paine added a second part in a similar spirit. As the first portion was written in reply to the *Reflections*, the second was directed against the *Appeal*. But with Burke's historical facts, or his profound philosophical deductions, Paine warily refrained



from grappling. They were beyond his measure. All he could do was to look superficially at the abuses of government, state in his popular style the objections which might occur to the plainest capacity, panegyrize the American Revolution in which he had borne no inconsiderable part, assail the aristocracy, denounce the law of primogeniture, profess great zeal for the poor, and bewail the heavy imposts which ministers and their subservient magnates in Parliament had succeeded in laying on the shoulders of an oppressed people. Of course this language was considered, and perhaps at the time justly considered, violently revolutionary. The hint Burke gave to make its author responsible for it in a tribunal of justice was only too readily taken by the Government. Yet Paine, in reality, said but little more in 1791 and 1792, than Mr. Bright has frequently said in our day, in orations which have been cheered by respectable classes, and admired as models of powerful eloquence by Conservative ministers.

Assailed by the republican Paine, who had formerly professed to admire him, and denounced by some of his companions in the Whig ranks, who looked upon him as a renegade from his former principles, Burke found himself, his motives, and his writings on the French Revolution fully appreciated by one old and dear friend, who had been intimate with him in those young and hopeful days when the *Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful* was published, and his name was only known in literary circles as the brilliant antagonist of Johnson at the *Turk's Head*. Sir Joshua Reynolds, in the course of his amiable and honourable life, had taken no active part in politics, but he had ever remained a steady and unostentatious Whig, attached to Burke and the political

side which Burke espoused. They were now both old; and the health of the great artist was fast declining. He was not, however, to leave this earthly scene without giving his testimony in favour of his friend. On publishing an engraving of Burke from the fine portrait of 1775, Reynolds added underneath it the lines alluding to Abdiel in the fifth book of *Paradise Lost*. Their application to Burke with regard to his conduct on the French Revolution, and the treatment he had received from his former friends, could not be mistaken:—

“ So spake the fervent Angel, but his zeal  
 None seconded, as out of season judged,  
 Or singular and rash. . . . . Unmoved,  
 . . . . .  
 Unshaken, unseduced, untterrified,  
 His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;  
 Nor number, nor example with him wrought,  
 To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,  
 Though single. From amidst them forth he passed  
 Long way through hostile scorn, which he sustained  
 Superior, nor of violence feared ought;  
 And with retorted scorn his back he turned  
 On those proud towers to swift destruction doomed.”

Burke could not but be gratified with this inscription of the lines from Milton. But he remonstrated with his zealous friend, insisted on the plate being broken up, and the copies which had not been distributed destroyed. If he happened afterwards to enter a house where the portrait was seen hanging on the walls, it has been said that, as a particular favour, he would beg the owner to have it taken down.\* Yet the affectionate evidence which Reynolds, in his character as an artist, gave of his attachment to his old friend, could not but be in reality highly gratifying. Burke's political friendships had suf-

\* Prior, p. 345.

ferred the most disastrous shipwreck ; but his intercourse with the men of letters and artists who had known him so long, never suffered any estrangement. To the last he had been on the most affectionate terms with Dr. Johnson ; and years had only increased the warmth of his early sympathy with Reynolds.

## CHAPTER XLI.

1791-1792.

## FATHER AND SON.

DURING the summer of 1791, of which the earlier portion was spent by Burke and his family at Margate, other business beside the publication of the Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs was occupying his thoughts. The French Revolution had assumed new and more decided features. Burke could appeal to the fulfilment of the prophecies he had made during the preceding two years, as a justification of his views on the more advanced stage of the great moral and political phenomena, of which the indications perplexed, alarmed and at last appalled the world. He had long maintained that Louis XVI. had, in fact, ceased to reign; that the new constitution, in which he was still recognized as the sovereign of France, with powers however scarcely so extensive as an American President, was utterly inconsistent with any monarchical principles; that the King, while nominally the chief executive officer under the new arrangement, was a mere prisoner. In the fourth week of June, he found his views confirmed by the news that the Royal Family had at length fled from Paris, and escaped out of the hands of the philanthropic legislators, whose gospel was the Social Contract of Rousseau. When it was supposed that the flight of

the poor King and Queen had been successful, the citizens of London shook hands in the street, and openly rejoiced. The dejection, too, was to Burke's eyes quite as obvious when the tidings of the arrest at Varennes followed rapidly on the account of the Royal escape. He considered the attempt, though it failed, a right measure, since it had at least the merit of bringing affairs to an issue. The brave Bouillé, almost the only capable man in this fearful crisis devoted to the French monarchy, had, on the failure of the plan, fled across the frontier. He immediately afterwards wrote from Luxemburg to Burke, thanking him for what he had done in the cause of royalty. Burke admired Bouillé, and the distinguished part he had recently acted. From Margate he replied to the Marquis's letter, agreeing with him in all his sentiments of indignation at the insults heaped on the Royal Family as they were ignominiously conducted back to prison at Paris, and expressing the highest respect for his conduct and character.\*

Burke was, indeed, during his stay at Margate, in great request by the most distinguished partisans of the French monarchy. His name was on all their lips. His aid was most earnestly sought. On him alone, in their estimation, appeared to depend the fate of the House of Bourbon. At no time were the diplomacies of Europe in a more active state of fermentation than when Burke inhaled the fresh breezes on the Kentish coast, and corrected the proofs of the Appeal. For months the probabilities of the interference of other Powers for the restoration of the unhappy Louis XVI. to a condition of regal independence, had been earnestly canvassed; his attempt to escape, and his subsequent capture, only made

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 216.

the schemes in agitation assume a more positive form of development; and the part which England would take in such an eventuality, was naturally a subject of much anxiety to foreign ministers and the sovereigns who professed to espouse, what they called, the common cause of kings.

At this time the sanguine and obsequious Calonne, the minister of the French Princes, who had formed a miniature Versailles at Coblenz, came over secretly to England. Official etiquette forbade him to hold any direct communication with the English Government; and Pitt and Dundas, hoping to feel their way, were in no hurry to declare themselves either on one side or the other. Calonne naturally sought for Burke to aid him in the emergency. The statesman, however, was neither at Beaconsfield nor at St. James's. Calonne followed him down to Margate, and left at his residence an anonymous letter, asking for a private interview. Burke had some hesitation before acceding to the request of the mysterious epistle. It was, however, at last granted, and he was soon on the most intimate terms with the representative of the French Princes, who, thinking that their absence would be regretted with shame by all France, had made so much haste to fly across the Rhine. The wish M. de Calonne diplomatically conveyed from them to Burke could not but be gratifying. He was again and again most earnestly thanked for all he had done in the cause of suffering royalty. The gratitude which Monsieur and his brother the Comte d'Artois felt, they trusted some day publicly to acknowledge before all France. But, having done so much, would Mr. Burke refrain from doing a little more in aid of the French monarchy? The time when the kings of

Europe were to set their armies in motion was drawing near. Would he not aid the French Princes, and through them the King and Queen of France, with his advice as to how the restoration was to be carried out? Would he not be the guide and the counsellor of the Princes and nobles who revered him at Coblenz?

Such an appeal could not be made in vain. Burke was a statesman of another stamp from the Breteuils and Calonnes, and the nobles at Coblenz, who kept books containing the exact date when the members of their order left France, in order that, when the auspicious day of their entry into Paris at the head of foreign battalions should arrive, the rewards might be proportioned to the period of their emigration. He could, doubtless, do much good, and render the emigrant nobles and princes much real service, if they would only listen to his advice. But would they listen to it? And, after they had heard it, would they follow it? Would, above all, the kings and emperors who appeared to be so zealous for Louis XVI., and who were about to publish their famous declaration of the twenty-seventh of August, at Pilnitz, making his cause their own, follow the counsels of the disinterested, philanthropic, and far-sighted English statesman? These were the questions. Burke answered them in the affirmative; and it was determined that his son Richard should proceed as his representative to the Continent, communicate with him on all that he heard and saw, and be, in return, the medium of conveying Burke's advice to the royal exiles at Coblenz.

All this seemed easy. The most delicate circumstances attending Richard's mission, were however yet to be settled. Such a step could not, in Burke's own opinion, be properly taken without the sanction of the

English Government ; and in what light would the powerful and jealous Prime Minister regard such a proceeding ? When Pitt and Dundas were consulted, it is evident that, though they said nothing to deter Richard from going to Coblenz, they were by no means inclined to authorize officially his going. They appear to have thought that it was somewhat of an interference with the functions of the Government, and an intrusion into their own exclusive sphere. Burke had done them good service ; he was in high favour at court ; the object he professed to have in view was one to which they could scarcely declare themselves averse ; they knew that he was not a man to be safely thwarted ; still they were, in their hearts, far from pleased with Richard's proposed journey. Probably Calonne, in first broaching it, hoped that by such a means the English Government would itself be drawn into the views of the Princes at Coblenz. It was, at all events, an indirect means of communicating with the Ministers, and discovering their intentions. Might Richard, when he was abroad, inform the English Government of what came under his observation ? Dundas politely replied in the affirmative ; he would not say more ; he could scarcely say less ; and this was all the encouragement Richard received from Pitt's confidential friend and colleague, before setting forth on his undertaking. No wonder that Burke himself had many misgivings as his son privately took his leave. Richard was far on his way to Dover before any members of the family, except his father and mother, knew that he was going on to the Continent.

He left an anxious household behind him. Both the father and mother looked for news of Richard's progress with the greatest impatience, and their breakfast-table



was only gladdened by the arrival of a letter from that son on which they had based so many hopes. The first letter from Burke on this subject was written, while he was still at Margate, to his brother. It shows how little faith he had in the friendly spirit in which the Government might profess to regard this irregular embassy, and how awkward he considered young Richard's position. "Half-confidence, or a power given to be disowned, is a ticklish thing. The more I consider it, the more delicate it appears to me. God direct him!" This letter is also valuable from another circumstance. Being written immediately after the news had arrived of the riots in Birmingham, where, on the fourteenth of July, the houses of Priestley and other dissenters who met to celebrate the anniversary of the destruction of the Bastille, were attacked and almost demolished by the mob, it unmistakably evinces that, however much he disliked the admirers of the French Revolution in general, and his own philosophical antagonist Dr. Priestley in particular, yet he was as far from looking with approbation on excesses committed by the populace of Birmingham in support of the principles which he had so powerfully advocated, as on those of the populace of Paris, in the cause which he considered to be synonymous with all evil. "If," he wrote, "things be left to the mob, we see what happens. If they are suffered to go on, they commit that havoc which we want to guard against in the others. They bring great disgrace upon a cause; and, when once set afloat, it is impossible to guess what turn they may take. . . . No government, indeed, no honest man, will tolerate the excesses of the populace, which, though to a degree provoked by the petulance of these people, were truly horrid."\*

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. pp. 22, 23.

Richard was then at Brussels, where he remained a week. The days were sultry, the heat most oppressive, and his father and mother were afraid that travelling for a length of time under the Continental sun, might be attended with some risk to the health of one whose frame trembled with nervous susceptibility. Richard's physical strength had never been great; the energies of his mind overtasked his delicate body; but neither himself nor those of whom he was the darling, suspected that his constitution was already being slowly undermined by that fell disease which so frequently seizes on the most ardent of men, and most beautiful of women, as its destined prey. Gentle and graceful, earnest in the cause he had gone forth to support, and full of high aspirations, the shadow of death was upon his brow: but he knew it not. He surveyed the strange scenes that came before him with a steady and penetrating eye; and hoped to play a great part in the world from which he was so soon to be summoned.

At Brussels a great number of the emigrants were settled. Richard was received by them with open arms. No person could answer for his identity; but his assertion that he was Edmund Burke's son was at once believed, and he was admitted into all the secrets of affairs. He was delighted, as it was natural he should be, with his reception, and in writing an account of it to his father, confessed that he had really, since his arrival, enjoyed true happiness. Going to dinner at M. de la Querilles, the chief of the emigrants, he found himself the centre of an admiring circle. "You see well, Sir," said his host, in French, "the zeal of these gentlemen, to testify to you how much all good Frenchmen owe to your illustrious father." Richard was, indeed, treated as a prince of the

blood. He said that Monsieur himself could not have been received with more courtesy. A solemn deputation of six of the leading nobles waited upon him with an address, which he transmitted to his father. It was couched in the most complimentary terms, and Richard replied to it in terms equally complimentary. He spoke confidently of the speedy restoration of the French nobility to their patrimonial estates. He proudly declared that the testimonial they had that day presented to him would ever be preserved in his family, and descend as an hereditary honour. Alas ! what are the hopes of man ? What has become of that French nobility, whose permanent restoration with all the august institutions of the monarchy was considered such a certainty ? What has become of that family of Burke's, in whose archives at Beaconsfield the testimonial was to be preserved, and descend through many generations ?\*

Happy with his reception at Brussels, happy at the prospect of succeeding in the object of his mission, and sanguinely calculating on a long and illustrious political career, which he thought just opening before him, Richard left the Belgian capital, and passed Juliers and Bonn on his way to Coblenz. He saw on his route parties of emigrants, all eloquent on the crimes of the ruling powers in Paris, and bearing in their own persons sad testimony of the greatness of that Revolution which had passed over the old France. The Bishop of Auxerre, who had been so kind to him, when in 1773 Richard went as a mere youth to reside in that provincial town to perfect himself in the French language, met him on his journey at Aix ; and the sight of his revered friend, poor, aged, and exiled, smote deeply upon his feel-

\* See Appendix to Correspondence, vol iv. pp. 531, 532.

ings. "What a revolution," he could not but exclaim, "when virtuous prelates, as well as an idle nobility, are sent forth, in their old-age, as destitute wanderers over the face of the earth!" Richard had a taste for the picturesque; but the beautiful scenery of the Rhine awoke but little enthusiasm within him, as he gravely thought on the human suffering which met his eyes. His philosophy was sufficiently comprehensive. He had been taught to pity the sorrows of ruined nobles and indigent bishops, as well as those of humble peasants and starving mechanics; and, knowing that the seat of all suffering is in the mind, felt that, perhaps, the condition of the poor noble and the poor bishop was more to be commiserated than even that of the poor artisan. Truly kings and nobles and prelates had fallen on evil days. The Revolution was sweeping on like the Rhine stream, as it rushed down its course regardless of the old castles on its banks, and of the blue mountains whose peaks seemed to touch the heavens.

A deficiency in post-horses delayed Richard's arrival at Bonn for some hours longer than he expected. On arriving at Coblenz he found that M. de Calonne had left that morning with the Comte d'Artois, to be present at a proposed meeting near Dresden between the Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia. The minister being gone, Richard, much disappointed, had recourse to the minister's wife. He had himself to announce that he came over at her husband's invitation. As the business was somewhat confidential, few persons were in the secret, and the impatient and anxious emissary was in no very agreeable position. He was, however, speedily introduced to Monsieur, and all difficulties of etiquette were most graciously removed. Monsieur was all smiles,

thanks, cordiality. The obligations he and all the Royal Family of France owed to Burke could not be exaggerated. But would Mr. Burke accept the offer that had been made to him? Would he be the adviser of suffering and exiled princes? Would he plead their cause with the King and Government of England? It was surely the duty of England to countenance the efforts about to be made for a restoration of the monarchy of the Bourbons. All good men, all great nations, were interested in seeing the Bourbons restored to the throne of France. Richard replied that his father was willing to do all that was in his power. If some confidential agent were sent to England to be near him, he would be ready to instruct that agent how to act, as circumstances might arise. Monsieur caught at the suggestion. "Oh yes," said he, "we must think of somebody to be *auprès de M. Burke*."\*

After some deliberation, it was settled that the little Chevalier de la Bintinnaye, whom Richard had seen in Brussels, and who was a nephew of the good Bishop of Auxerre, should proceed to England, and act as the statesman at Beaconsfield should direct. He was furnished with a letter from Monsieur to the King, and some indirect means Burke was expected to find for delivering it. He was furnished with credentials to the Government, to be used or not, according to the encouragement he might receive. The little Chevalier was furnished with plenty of letters, but very little money: an article, indeed, which is seldom supplied in great quantities to the diplomatic representatives of illustrious exiles.

This arrangement having been made, Richard had little more to do than to enjoy himself in the neighbourhood of Coblenz, until the return of Comte d'Artois and

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 258.

M. de Calonne. He went to Frankfort and saw the Fair. He tried to find some clue to the intricacies of German politics. He listened to rumour after rumour, and indulged in conjecture after conjecture. His society was universally sought; and he had to pay attention to all the emigrant nobles had to say, lending perhaps a somewhat too patient ear to all their scandals, all their back-bitings, their mutual distrust of each other, and of the Courts that professed to favour their cause. Without M. de Calonne, Richard could do nothing; and as day after day slipped away, he began to look homeward again, to his father's society, and their long conversations on French affairs, with more pleasure than he found in the duplicities, rivalries, jealousies, and intrigues of the little Court at Coblenz.

At length, on Saturday, the fourth of September, Calonne and the Comte d'Artois returned. All good Frenchmen, and true royalists, went out from Coblenz to see, after some weeks of separation, the meeting of the two royal brothers. Richard Burke was present, and, deeply impressed with what he saw, could not but contrast it with his reminiscences of the last time he saw Monsieur and the Comte d'Artois together, surrounded with all the pomp and magnificence of Versailles. They met on a bridge of boats on the Rhine. They flung themselves frequently into each other's arms, and again and again burst into tears. Many of the spectators wept too; and the shouts of "Vive le Roi!" which rose around, seemed to Richard as much to sadden as to enliven the scene. Poor Princes! poor King! poor emigrants! The Rhine stream flowed on swiftly, brightly, remorselessly; many tears after those of Coblenz were to be shed by them and their adherents; such tears, and the

shouts of "Vive le Roi!" accompanying them, were demonstrations to which, in the progress of things, busy Europe, impatient of much, was to grow very callous. But Richard Burke on the Rhine, and his father at Beaconsfield, still hoped that the hour had not yet passed; that something might be done for the French monarchy and the French monarch; that by an earnest, straightforward, and honest policy in the higher regions of courts and cabinets, the progress of the Revolution might be resisted, and the old spirit of loyalty to kings and attachment to institutions once more invoked.

They were not so far wrong. Only they calculated without their hosts. If there had been real wisdom at Vienna and Berlin, if weakness and indecision had not habitually marked the line of conduct pursued by the unhappy Louis XVI., and his still more unhappy Queen, if the Princes of the blood, and their followers at Coblenz, had in the smallest degree comprehended the times in which their lot had fallen, the epidemic might even then have been checked in its advance, and an era of constitutional reform have taken the place of an era of revolution. But this was not to be. The winds were to continue to blow as they listed. And in much the greater portion of the coming century, the prophecy of the author of the *Reflections* was to be sadly fulfilled: "Kings were to be tyrants from policy, and subjects rebels from principle."\*

The correspondence that passed on the subject between the father and son, reflecting the different hues which the rumours of the day assumed, and all their anxieties and forebodings while that war was germinating which was to devastate the Continent, alarm all man-

\* *Reflections on the French Revolution.*

kind for three-and-twenty years, add six hundred millions to the national debt of England, and shows clearly the folly and incapacity of those who professed to direct events, and put themselves in an antagonistic attitude to the Revolution, which, in one form or other, was to agitate every country, and shake every throne. Was the Emperor of Austria sincere? Was the King of Prussia sincere? Would they act together? Would they act separately? And what would England do? Her conduct was the great bugbear. She had professed an unswerving neutrality; but was this neutrality to be friendly or hostile? Surely it did not mean a neutrality favourable to the revolutionary cause? This absurd suspicion was gravely communicated to Richard Burke, and by him communicated to his father. The Hanoverian agent had thrown difficulties in the way of furnishing his contingent to the German army; and it was even said that the English Government had insisted on the Emperor's maintaining a large body of troops in Flanders, and by this means weakening the force he was preparing to lead against the French Revolutionists. Again and again was Burke entreated to see the King, and to see the Ministers. Burke was as zealous as Monsieur and the Comte d'Artois themselves, and spared no means to advocate their cause. He talked confidentially to the King's friend, the Bishop of Salisbury. He went into the terrace at Windsor, and had a long conversation with George III. For the first time, after so many years, of hostility, he met Pitt at dinner; but the wary minister shrank from speaking on foreign politics. "That does not the least surprise me," replied Richard Burke, when his father informed him of the Minister's silence. "It is the subject on which he is the most ignorant, the



most sore, and the most timid; and as you did not introduce the subject, (I am *not* sorry you did not,) it is very natural the conversation should take another direction."\*

At Lord Grenville's, on a subsequent occasion, Pitt was more outspoken. As Burke was earnestly dwelling on the dangers impending over England from the contagion of the revolutionary principles, Pitt said, "Never fear, Mr. Burke; depend upon it we shall go on as we are until the day of judgment." "Very likely, Sir," answered Burke; it is the day of no-judgment that I am afraid of." To Burke Pitt and his colleagues were personally kind and respectful; though they seemed unwilling to give Richard Burke a diplomatic appointment, even unattended with any salary or reward. In fact, they evidently looked upon Richard as an intruder into business with which he had much better not have meddled, and thought that he would have been much better at home. The good Richard, on the other hand, felt himself quite suited by nature for a diplomatist. "I know myself," he wrote to his father, "if any opening is given me, to be tolerably qualified for that sort of thing." And again, "I do think," he said, "(I have a talent for some kinds of negotiation." Dundas was Richard's only ministerial correspondent, and, indeed, the only person in the higher ministerial ranks who seemed to look upon him with the slightest favour. Interested and unscrupulous as the Lord Advocate was, personally he was kinder and more genial than the morose, jealous, and haughty Prime Minister. In answer to two very long letters of Richard about foreign politics, Dundas wrote a very short one, contradicting the foolish report about the in-

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 320.

terference of England with the movements of the Imperial troops, and indicating how little the Government believed in the Imperial declarations. He curtly remarked, "When I see a single step that looks like any of those great Powers taking a part, I shall believe it, but not till then."

The diplomacy of England was evidently at fault. Her Ministers knew nothing and believed nothing. None who sat at the Council-board in the autumn of 1791, saw that Europe was on the eve of the most formidable war that it had ever known ; that over the Alps and across the Rhine, from Lisbon to Moscow, the tide of blood would flow on and on ; and that not until a generation had come and gone, would the world settle down into a grim tranquillity, which could be called neither war nor peace, but only an iron repression.

The great subject of correspondence between Burke and his son during the month of August, was not, however, so much the probabilities of war or peace. They knew, what the English Ministers did not know, that war there would be. With them it was a mere question of time, of what Powers would join the alliance, and on what principle the war would be made : the thing itself was a certainty. But what was not so certain at the time was, whether King Louis XVI. would or would not accept the Constitution, which, after much delay, alteration, and revision, was at last finally completed. Of course the Royalists at Coblenz were all against the acceptance ; and with them Burke fully agreed. Not unwisely. The impracticability of this Constitution was evident. The fact of the King being in reality under constraint, could not, after the flight to Varennes, be denied by any one. Being no longer a free agent,

why should he pretend to deliberation? It was much better at once to abdicate; he had long ceased to reign. Against this same Constitution, too, only two months before, on flying from Paris, he had left a written protest. What folly, then, to commit perjury, to swear fidelity to what he abhorred, and what had become an impossibility, to declare amid the thunders of artillery, and with all the outward signs of rejoicing, his adhesion to what he had in private resolved to execute as badly as possible, in order that the world might see that this sublime constitutional edifice was a manifest absurdity! Yet the King's name had long ago been called a tower of strength. By accepting the Constitution, he allowed whatever power yet remained in such a watchword, to strengthen his enemies; and when the allied forces should advance to the French frontiers, they would have nominally to make war against himself as King of France, as well as against the revolutionary authorities, whom he was as anxious as the emigrants at Coblenz, and the Sovereigns who professed to be arming in his cause, to see overthrown.

Burke's advice then was decidedly against accepting. To enforce this opinion, Richard Burke wrote privately to Louis XVI., and Burke himself addressed an earnest and dignified letter to Marie Antoinette. There were difficulties, however, attending the conveyance of this epistle. The concluding sentences were put by the Duke of Dorset in the royal cipher; but the agent through whom it was to be transmitted, disapproved of its contents; and Burke doubted whether a single sentence of his letter reached the illustrious lady to whom it was respectfully addressed.

Both Richard and himself might have spared them-

selves much trouble. All their anxieties on the matter were set at rest on the fourteenth of September, when poor Louis formally accepted the Constitution, to the mortification of his friends, and to the delight of his foes. Richard Burke repented of his journey, and wished to come home. Burke wrote him letter after letter, advising him to stay yet a little longer; but before those letters reached Coblenz, the impatient and dissatisfied Richard was on his road back to England.

The journey to Coblenz was well intentioned. It was, however, a mistake. The son was deceived; the father was deceived. Little could be really effected towards the restoration of the French monarchy through the medium of the emigrants at Coblenz. Of all the actors in that drama, they were perhaps the most incapable. Burke's attached friend, the good, the learned, but prolix Dr. Laurence, suspecting that the designs of the exiled Royalists were very different from those which Burke had in view, had only too much reason for earnestly advising him to withdraw his son from Coblenz.

This journey did not improve Burke's position at home. While the Ministers thought it meddling and troublesome, the Opposition looked upon it as the most absurd infatuation. Burke was accused of thinking that he alone could restore the French monarchy, and of seeking to establish it in all its former despotism. No imputation was more unjust. The monarchy of the past he wished to remain in the past; what he wished to see restored was something very different, and may be the best expressed in his own words. They give the most direct answer to those who would represent him as madly wishing to see the Bastille and all the other

means of oppression once more established in France. Alluding to the emigrants and the designs of the allied Powers, he wrote a last letter to his son, while he hoped that Richard was still at Coblenz, and said: "They ought to promise distinctly and without ambiguity, that they mean, when the monarchy as the essential basis shall be restored, to secure with it a free constitution; and that for this purpose they will cause, at a meeting of the States, freely chosen, according to the ancient legal order, to vote by order:—All *Lettres de Cachet* and other means of arbitrary imprisonment to be abolished. That all taxation shall be by the said States, conjointly with the King. That responsibility shall be established, and the public revenue put out of the power of abuse and malversation. A canonical synod of the Gallican Church to reform all abuses; and (as, unfortunately, the King has lost all reputation,) they should pledge themselves with their lives and fortunes to support along with their King those conditions and that wise order which can alone support a free and vigorous government. Without such a declaration, or to that effect, they can hope for no converts. For my part, for one, though I make no doubt of preferring the ancient course, or almost any other, to this vile chimera and sick man's dream of government, yet I could not actively, or with a good heart and clear conscience, go to the establishment of a monarchical despotism in the place of this system of anarchy: I should think myself obliged to withdraw myself wholly from such a competition, and give repose to my age, as I should wish you to give other employment to your youth."\*

Perhaps it would have been as well had Burke really

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 348.

given repose to his age, and his son other employment for his youth. Their interference in this business certainly did no good, and caused them much annoyance. Richard too readily believed all that the emigrants told him; he thought them sincere, patriotic, made wiser men by their misfortunes, and ready, if they returned to France, to establish liberal institutions, along with the monarchy to which they professed to be so devoted. This was, however, far from being correct. The follies of the emigrants equalled the crimes of the revolutionists. The knot of exiles at Coblenz were in no respect wiser men than in the days before the Bastille fell; unimpressed with the serious nature of the drama in which they were called to act, and indifferent to the warnings which were everywhere around them, they had learnt nothing, and forgotten nothing. To the programme of policy which Burke presented to the consideration of his son, as quoted in the preceding paragraph, they would not have subscribed. Even when he mentioned it to their agent, who had been sent over at Richard's recommendation, the Chevalier de la Bintinnaye, he found the little Chevalier making wry faces and shrugging his shoulders at the mere mention of liberal reforms, and that all the politeness of the Faubourg St. Germain scarcely restrained him from laughing in Burke's face. According to the exiles, the monarchy was indeed to be restored, but without conditions. In their hearts they were not prepared to abate one hair's-breadth of their privileges, or to part with a single acre of their confiscated estates. Then their mutual jealousies were ridiculous and intolerable. The Princes at Coblenz were jealous of the King and Queen of France; the King and Queen were jealous of the exiles at Coblenz; they were

both jealous of the royal potentates whom they asked for assistance. Every exile was jealous of another exile. Brussels looked askance at Coblenz, and Coblenz with doubt and suspicion on Vienna, Berlin, and London; while Vienna, Berlin, and London, one and all distrusted the intentions of each other. Every individual exile reflected in his own person the jealousy of higher personages. The advisers of the poor King in Paris were all set down as arrant Republicans, because they had not, at the first outbreak of the Revolution, shaken the dust of rebellious France from off their feet. Many of those whose date of exile was of the earliest, and which passed for another patent of nobility, fared little better. If any of them were employed on confidential missions, they became the object of dislike and suspicion to all the rest; and those who were then performing their duties in different countries, imagined that they were forgotten by the Princes, or that they were being supplanted by other noblemen who had the ear of Monsieur and the Comte d'Artois.

Richard Burke brought with him from Coblenz the eloquent Cazalès, with whom he had contracted a close friendship at Coblenz, and whom he considered to have in his thick massive person a striking likeness both to Charles Fox and Mirabeau, and therefore Richard drew the somewhat extraordinary conclusion, that all great orators more or less resembled each other. So much did M. de Cazalès admire Burke, that he declared he would go to England for the express purpose of seeing him only. The journey was partly a fulfilment of this intention; and of course M. de Cazalès was invited, like other distinguished emigrants, to spend a few days under the hospitable roof at Beaconsfield.

This was an ordinary act of courtesy ; but not so thought the Chevalier de la Bintinnaye. He at once conceived the darkest suspicions. He was certain that M. de Cazalès had been brought over by Richard Burke to supersede him in his mission. He had been made a victim. There was no putting any trust in princes, still less in the kindness of the English statesman. The little Chevalier felt very uncomfortable. He received very few letters from Coblenz. Neither Monsieur nor the Comte d'Artois corresponded with him ; besides—and this was indeed a great grievance—they sent him no money to defray the expenses of his embassy. He wrote indignantly to Burke, complaining of the treatment he imagined himself to have received, intimating his intention of at once resigning the office he had been sent over to fill, and accusing both the father and son of something very like treachery.

Such is a fair specimen of the trouble to which Burke almost daily exposed himself from the emigrants who sought his protection. It appears never to have occurred to the mind of the little Chevalier, nor to the minds of his brother exiles, whose importunities were endless, that the illustrious Englishman had not the slightest personal interest in their business. What he did they considered as a matter of course ; and they were only surprised that he did not do more. Burke replied in a manly tone of remonstrance to the Chevalier's querulous epistle. He at once set him at ease with respect to M. de Cazalès, and showed how absurd it was to suppose that either himself, or his son who had recommended the Chevalier for the mission, should allow him immediately afterwards to be set aside. "You ought," said Burke, "to have had clearer instructions and better information. You



ought to have had a provision for the necessary expenses of your journey. We are not the causes why you are not better enabled to execute your trust." Before finishing his letter, without complaining of the labours and vexations to which he had subjected himself for the sake of the French Royalists, he let fall a few sentences which are a fine comment on the exertions of himself and his son in this cause, and of his motives, which were so far beyond the comprehension of vulgar politicians, either of the democratic platform, or of the aristocratic liberalism of Holland House. "In the disinterested part we actively take in this affair," he wrote, "we want no apology to any human creature. We have made many enemies here, and no friends, by the part we have taken. We have, for your sakes, mixed with those with whom we have had no natural intercourse. We have quitted our business, we have broken in upon our enjoyments. For one mortification you have endured, we have endured twenty. My son has crossed land and sea with much trouble, and at an expense above his means. But the cause of humanity requires it; he does not murmur; and he is ready to do as much and more for men whose faces he has not seen."\*

The letter had its effect. The dark clouds vanished from the little Chevalier's mind; and his intimacy with the Burkes, in despite of their friendship for M. de Cazalès, became as pleasant and genial as ever. Burke knew that Bintinnaye had some reason to complain, and he was himself far from satisfied with the conduct either of the Princes at Coblenz, or of the Sovereigns who had declared in favour of their cause. "Had your great people," he said, "been wise, regular, attentive, and vigi-

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 355.

lant, they never would have stood in need of my assistance or yours."

Notwithstanding the faults of monarchs and emigrants, Burke was still determined to render them all the assistance in his power. Richard was now at home again, to the delight of Burke; and their old conversations on French affairs were resumed. The two friends, for such the father and the son appeared, had much to say to each other. Burke's interviews with the King, his conversations with Grenville, Dundas, and Pitt, the reports of the different distinguished strangers who had visited Beaconsfield, the conduct of Fox and his followers, a letter from that Mr. Eden of the commercial treaty, who, through Pitt's favour, had become Lord Auckland, thanking Burke, as the father of nine children, for his Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs, and a still more important letter from Lord Fitzwilliam, the heir and representative of Lord Rockingham, expressing his agreement with all Burke had written on the French Revolution, were all earnestly communicated to Richard, his opinion on every subject carefully asked and seriously considered by the fond and anxious father. Richard on his part had a great deal to say. His Continental journey had been no idle one; he had kept his eyes and his ears open; and he had much valuable diplomatic information to impart, in which Burke took the deepest interest. Days passed away in earnest and affectionate commune; and the result was, that Burke again took up his pen, to give expression to his ideas on the features which the French Revolution and Continental affairs in general assumed as the year 1791 drew to its close, while the German diplomatists were brooding on that war which was soon to come vigorously into life.

Some time previously Burke had drawn up, on a sheet of paper, a kind of diplomatic note or memorial, proposing England as a mediator between the French people and their Sovereign, on the terms of guaranteeing constitutional freedom to the one, and the rights of the Crown to the other. In the event of this mediation not being accepted, the paper concluded by intimating the speedy withdrawal of the English ambassador, on the ground that, since privately there were no doubts of the readiness of Louis XVI. to comply with the English arbitration, it would not be proper to keep a diplomatic representative at a court where the Sovereign had lost all freedom. This memorial was well intentioned. It was drawn up with much dignity and perspicuity of expression. The time was, however, not yet ripe for such a proceeding. It certainly far outstripped the intentions of the English Government. Had their mediation been asked, it might have been beneficial; but there was little use in offering it in the state of French parties; and Burke's hints Pitt and Dundas, to whom they appear to have been submitted, were not at all prepared to take.\*

Events were, however, fast moving onward. What seemed in the earlier part of 1791 a great improbability, became at the end of the year not at all unlikely. Notwithstanding the want of foresight displayed by the English Ministry, Europe was on the threshold of war. The clouds were gathering apace. Remonstrances were being exchanged; troops were assembling on the frontiers; the Revolutionists becoming daily more defiant. With his mind full of the information Richard gave to

\* Hints for a Memorial to be delivered to Monsieur de M. M., published in Burke's Works.

him about what was passing in the diplomatic circles of the Continent, and almost overburdened with his own constant meditations on the same subject, he determined to make another attempt to influence opinion in the higher regions of diplomacy.

The *Reflections on the French Revolution*, and the *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, were both popular compositions, adapted for general readers. The *Thoughts on French Affairs*, which he committed to paper during this December, were designed for a very different audience. They were suggestions for ministers of state, and being addressed almost exclusively to the court and cabinet, were not written with the author's ordinary style of impassioned and florid eloquence. There are few traces in them of the unrivalled rhetorician; but they abound in the deepest wisdom of the political philosopher, and may be read with much interest and profit even in the present day, when the state of Europe to which they were directly applied has undergone so many transformations. The work is indeed what it is called, a series of thoughts; and they are such thoughts as set those who read them to think. Burke shows that the French Revolution was not a mere change in the institutions of a country, but a revolution of doctrines and opinions, capable of being applied everywhere, and everywhere productive of the most important effects. Here we first find Canning's idea, that the wars which would henceforth convulse Europe, would be wars of opinion. Here, too, we find first affirmed the notion which Sir James Mackintosh afterwards enforced, and Lord Macaulay still more recently dwelt upon with much brilliant rhetoric, that the only event to be compared with the French Revolution was

the Reformation ; that like the great religious movement of the sixteenth century, it made men more attached to their party than to their country ; and that, in a similar manner, all Europe might become divided into contending factions, the one endeavouring to preserve what was old, and the other eager to embrace what was new. The doctrine that a majority of the people, told by the head, had a right to make all the laws, and decide on the destinies of their country, had taken the place of the doctrine of "justification by faith or by works." It was a doctrine equally expansive. It was as pregnant with great results. It unsettled all the existing governments of the world ; and left nothing stable in the political system. The author then takes a deliberate survey of all Europe, showing the course the French proselytism was likely to take, anticipating its effects in Germany and Italy, and clearly foretelling the designs on Savoy as the key of Lombardy, and on the German provinces situated on the left bank of the Rhine. Read by the light of the wars of the Revolution and Napoleon, there is much that is remarkably significant in this detailed examination of the state of Europe, just before the great contest with the French Republic began. There was no madness, there was little extravagance, in the calm reasoning, profound knowledge, and political foresight displayed in those observations on foreign policy. Of the troubles which Burke then saw in store for all Europe, from the proclamation of the omnipotence of universal suffrage, and the theories about the natural boundaries of empires, we have not yet seen the end ; and Professor F. Gentz, when some months afterwards he published his translation of the *Reflections on the French Revolution*, at Berlin, and appended to it his valuable

notes for the instruction of his countrymen, had some reason to look upon Burke as the statesman who knew best the political condition of Germany, and best understood the dangers with which the privileges of the Germanic body would be threatened both by democratic revolutionists and despotic sovereigns, both from France as a Republic, and from France as an Empire.\* In those *Thoughts on French Affairs*, the author clearly shows that, when he advised a Coalition against the revolutionary spirit, he was fully sensible of the difficulties with which it would be attended, from the jealousies of the two great German Powers, the personal characters of the different Continental Sovereigns, and even from the very extremities of bankruptcy and confiscation to which the Revolutionists were, and daily would be further, driven.

Only one thing surprises the careful reader who studies this statesmanlike survey of Europe, its courts, government, and policy, at the end of 1791. It is how a politician, so philosophical, so far-sighted, so well informed, so experienced, and so sagacious, should ever have believed in the possibility of any steady and disinterested coalition against France at all, or how he could ever expect that a war waged against the French Revolution by such princes as he shows the German Sovereigns and most of the Continental potentates to be, could be attended with beneficial results. Burke's own treatise proves that such a design had failure written upon its face. Why, then, did he recommend it? His profound comparison between the French Revolution and the great Protestant Reformation might have taught him better. If the enemy to be contended

\* See Professor F. Gentz's German Translation of Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, etc.: Berlin, 1793.

against, was not merely a nation nor a material power, but doctrines and opinions, was it by armies that doctrines and opinions could be triumphantly combated? What was their effect on the Calvinists of Switzerland, the Lutherans of Germany, and the Puritan Reformers of England? What was their effect even on France herself? All history shows that it is impossible by fire and sword to extirpate an idea. However repressed for a moment, it is sure to burst forth into life again, and all the stronger for the temporary repression. Suppose the Sovereigns, instead of making insincere and bombastic declarations at Pilnitz, and secretly meditating the partition of France, had tried the efficacy of good government in their own territories? The world might not have seen Austerlitz, nor Jena, nor the occupation of Paris, nor the Congress of Vienna, nor the Holy Alliance, nor all the miseries and anarchies and despotisms of seventy years; and the world might have been none the worse, and the prospects of Europe a great deal better.

Burke had many misgivings, as he read over his *Thoughts on French Affairs*, after it had been copied from his slurred, blotted, and scrawling manuscript, into the neat and precise writing of the clerk Swift. The statesman saw the danger to Europe clearly; but he was far from being so confident as to the wisdom of the measures he recommended to counteract the evil. He was dissatisfied with the Sovereign whom he was anxious to befriend. He was dissatisfied with himself, and felt the inadequacy of his efforts to stem the revolutionary torrent which was rolling so impetuously onward. He thought of abandoning the subject altogether, and of piously leaving everything to God. He added a few concluding reflections, which at once beautiful and mournful,

speaking with much pathetic meaning. He wrote : " I have done with this subject, I believe, for ever. It has given me many anxious moments for the last two years. If a great change is to be made in human affairs, the minds of men will be fitted to it, the general opinions and feelings will draw that way. Every fear, every hope, will forward it ; and then they who persist in opposing this mighty current in human affairs, will appear rather to resist the decrees of Providence than the mere designs of men."

He was not likely, even by such salutary reflections, to subside into a mere passive spectator of events. The interest he took in all human affairs was too strong, the judgment he formed too clear and sagacious, for him by any merely selfish considerations to look on the progress of Continental affairs with apathy. For the moment however he turned to that other question which had last year again begun to employ his thoughts, and which the alarm he felt at the democratic agitation, both abroad and at home, only rendered more important.

Richard had not been at home more than a fortnight when he was summoned to perform the duties he had undertaken as legal adviser to the Irish Roman Catholics. It was necessary for him to leave his father's roof, cross St. George's Channel in the cold month of December, and repair to Dublin. His zeal and anxiety in this business, as in that of the French Royalists, fully equalled Burke's own ; both the father and son laboured together with a common object and the most hearty sympathy ; and their earnestness in the one cause stimulated their earnestness in the other. There was something admirably consistent and statesmanlike in their views on those two great public questions. Because they were



vehemently opposed to the French Jacobinism, they were only the more ardent in their desires to see the religious disabilities of the Roman Catholics removed. Zeal could only successfully be combated by zeal. The Roman Catholics of Ireland, whatever might be their faults and errors, had at least remained steadily attached to the old religion. They could never, from the very nature of their religious principles, be cordial allies with the democrats who professed atheism, and had in France been the persecutors of all who continued steadily attached to the ancient faith. What, under such circumstances, ought a government to do that wished to counteract the prevailing spirit, and oppose itself steadily to the rage for innovation? Surely to remove the grievances of all its subjects, whom the fact of their being Catholics proved that they could have no real sympathy with atheists. This was not a time for a government to deprive itself of any of its natural allies. To conciliate the Catholics, and to draw the bonds of union closer between England and Ireland, by giving to the large majority of the Irish population the privileges of British citizens, was sound policy in a season of democratic revolution, and of an impending war which would be not merely a contest between Foreign Powers for a frontier or an island, but a war of doctrines and opinions everywhere applicable.

All this both the father and son clearly saw before the Irish problem had presented itself to the minds of any other politicians. They began to correspond with each other during their separation on this matter, with the same constancy, zeal, and affection, as during Richard's recent journey to Coblenz. Assuredly their letters well repay the most attentive perusal, not merely from

the information they convey and the justness of the views they express, but also from the beautiful spectacle of parental love and filial devotion they so unpretendingly exhibit. Burke's letters to Dublin, as well as the letters to Coblenz, generally commence with the words, "My dear son and friend," or some equivalent phrase, with the same tender signification. Richard, in reply, is equally warm, and shows in every line how sensible he was both of his father's and mother's cares, and what pleasure his epistle would convey to their hearts. Neither Burke nor his wife had any dark suspicion that Richard's health was secretly undermined; but they knew that he was delicate; and every now and then their anxieties on the subject broke forth, and were set at rest again by the son's cheering words. "God watch over you, my son, and make you useful to all sorts of good causes," is Burke's fervent ejaculation as Richard went to the scene of his duties. Again and again he reminds him of all that he had himself hoped to do for Ireland in this cause of religious and political emancipation, and trusting that, though himself might not live to see it, Richard might be the beneficial instrument of doing more for his native land than he had ever hoped to perform. The journey recalled to Burke all the old aspirations in the days when, as Mr. Secretary Hamilton's companion and adviser, he first thought of the means of working out the deliverance of Ireland.

Sir Hercules Langrishe and Burke, without seeing much of each other, had remained on good terms ever since that time; and the baronet, a most influential and respectable member of the Irish Parliament, a man of wit and fashion, had entertained Burke and his son with great kindness and hospitality when they visited Ireland

together in the autumn of 1787. The time had at length come when the theory of emancipation, which the two friends had discussed together in their early days, seemed likely to be practically accomplished. Politically, Ireland had become free. Her religious disabilities still remained ; out that elaborate machinery of oppression, the systematic penal code, had been completely disjointed. By one great effort the iron framework would at once fall in pieces ; and the great majority of Irishmen be placed both religiously and politically on an equality with their fellow-citizens. It is just, however, at the time when a great reform is to be effected, that some of its most ardent advocates become scrupulous. In the distance it seems most desirable ; but when close at hand, even those who had longed for it, look upon its arrival with dread. In this class of reformers was the accomplished and patriotic Sir Hercules Langrishe. He had with Burke gone the whole length of the theory of emancipation in their long conversations in 1761 ; but when young Richard arrived in Ireland as the agent of the Catholics in the December of 1791, Sir Hercules began to be perplexed with doubts, and to reconsider his former views. In a long letter to Burke at Beaconsfield, while alluding to what had passed between them, he still declared himself in favour of religious freedom ; but it was religious freedom with some exceptions. He talked the language, to which the next generation became so accustomed, of those who cannot openly deny a principle of which the natural consequences they most vehemently oppose. The Roman Catholics were to enjoy everything under the State ; but they were not to be the State. The legislative body had always, according to what had been established at the Revolution, to be Protestant. The coronation oath

was opposed to the admission of the Catholics into Parliament. It would alter all the principles of the Revolution of 1688. Besides, the Catholics were forming dangerous associations; incendiary papers were being published, and the doctrines of the French Revolution had taken root in the minds of the people.

These were the heads of the objections Sir Hercules Langrishe communicated to his friend against the complete carrying out of a scheme which they both thirty years before approved. Burke was not convinced by them. His opinions remained just what they had ever been. On the first day of the new year, 1792, he sat down to write an elaborate answer to his friend on folio sheets. He examined each objection in detail, and to each returned a conclusive reply. This letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe embraces indeed the whole political philosophy of religious freedom applied to Ireland, and by anticipation triumphantly disposes of all the argumentative fallacies which became in the mouths of the opponents such hackneyed commonplaces before the great measure of relief was carried in 1828. Powerful, eloquent, unanswerable, it made many converts at the time, and was during the long struggle a kind of textbook for the champions of the Irish Catholics. Sheil, Plunkett, and O'Connell were never tired of quoting this remarkable treatise in the form of a letter; and it shows clearly how far the large mind of Burke soared above those of contemporary statesmen, even while he was being denounced as a madman and a renegade.

It greatly aided Richard Burke in his endeavours for the Relief of the Catholics during the year at the commencement of which it was written. Before that session of the Irish Parliament a Bill was passed, removing

many of the restraints to which they were subject in trade, marriage, and education ; and this was afterwards followed by still more important concessions. Richard had a troublesome cough ; the beautiful colour on his cheek was not that of perfect health ; but if his hours were numbered, he might, even in this early summer of his life, feel, as his father did before him, that he had not lived in vain.

The broad scenes of Burke's laborious life were gradually closing in. As each succeeding year passed on, the old man found himself almost alone. In February he was in town for the session ; but, in his political isolation, was little inclined to take any active part in the ordinary debates. He had also the most mournful duties of friendship to perform, quite sufficient for the time to subdue his political zeal, had it been ever so ardent. His dear friend, Sir Joshua Reynolds, was dying, with the same tranquillity of mind, the same gentleness of manner, the same quiet satisfaction that had so long distinguished the even tenor of his life. Burke watched over him to the end, and almost received his last sigh. Being the trusted friend of the family, and appointed, along with the somewhat commonplace and shallow, but painstaking and respectable, Edmund Malone, the executor of the great artist's will, and the trusted friend of the family, Burke superintended all the details of the funeral, and took unwearied pains to carry out all the wishes of his departed friend. The funeral was on the most magnificent scale. All the members of the Royal Academy accompanied the remains of their late President to the grave. On their return from the interment Burke attempted to thank them, in the name of the family, for their attendance. But his emotion could

not be suppressed. The tears flowed down his cheek ; the accents faltered upon his lips. After making several attempts to speak, he found that for once the powers of utterance had forsaken him, and he hurriedly left the room.\*

One more of those tender ties that connected him with the world was thus cut asunder. A bosom-friend, in a far different acceptation of that sacred word from the relationship that ever existed between him and Charles Fox, was gone. Both the father and son had lost their most intimate associate, their kindest adviser ; and nothing was left that could fill the blank which the good Sir Joshua's death left in the circle at Beaconsfield. Burke found himself two thousand pounds richer by the will of the great artist ; and, old as he was, after such a life of toil and fame, this relief to his straitened finances was not despicable, though he soon thought of his poor Irish relations on the Blackwater, and wished his son Richard to look after them, and bestow upon them in his own name, a twentieth portion of this legacy, to render the close of their humble lives a little easier.†

Soon after Reynolds's death there appeared in the newspapers a character of the lamented artist, written with great force, perspicuity, and discrimination. Burke's pen was immediately recognized. It was a portrait in words, drawn by the greatest master of eloquence and rhetoric, of his friend the great portrait-painter and artist of the age. The execution was worthy of the subject and of the author. It has been said that Burke frequently suggested subjects to Reynolds, as to Barry ; and that the picture of Ugolino in particular is due to a

\* See Preface to Reynolds's Works, edited by Beechey, vol. i. p. 268.

† See Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 444.

hint from the statesman to the artist. But it may be well doubted whether Ugolino was the most fitting subject for the pencil of Reynolds; it was not either in the terrible or the historical that his genius most delighted. He idealized portrait-painting, and yet it was not in the ideal, but in the living world of men and women, or rather of gentlemen and ladies, with their admiring and respectful inferiors, that he showed the fullest sympathy. Reynolds in art was very much what his friend was in politics: they both hated abstractions, and believed thoroughly in social forms and established institutions. To them both an educated English gentleman was a far more interesting being than an untutored savage. No wonder that Sir Joshua sympathized with Burke's *Reflections* on the French Revolution, and took his part against that of their common friends of the same party. Reynolds would have delighted to have sketched Marie Antoinette, as Burke saw her, amid all the pomp and magnificence of Versailles; but his genius would have shrunk with horror from portraying the infuriated populace of the Faubourg St. Antoine, dancing their wild Carmagnole and thirsting for blood. Both as an artist and a man, he acted on Burke's theory of "living pleasant;" and in pleasantness, in happiness, and in honour, his life passed away.

One day, about the year 1786, while on a visit at Beaconsfield, Burke showed him a strong, brawny child, lying and sprawling in a cradle at a labourer's cottage. The painter caught at the idea, and the little fellow, the son of Burke's bailiff, had the high honour of being depicted as the Infant Hercules, a celebrated picture by Reynolds, sold to the Empress of Russia. The Infant Hercules, an infant no longer, but a Hercules full grown,

is still alive. His useful and industrious life has been spent amid the scenes in which he was born, and he is one of the few connecting links of the Beaconsfield of to-day with the Beaconsfield of Burke's time. He is aware of the interest he excites from such an association. He is proud of having sat to Reynolds, and been, when a boy, patted on the head by Burke. Wars, revolutions, ministries, dynasties, have all since that time come and gone in rapid succession, without discomposing the Infant Hercules, who, for more than seventy years, has risen to his agricultural pursuits, regardless of all the feverish ambition of the world, and satisfied with doing a man's work and living a man's life.

By the death of Reynolds, another serious duty devolved upon Burke. He became the guardian of Reynolds's unmarried niece, Miss Palmer; and the wealth left by the amiable artist, who had so long prided himself on working at his easel steadily day by day until four o'clock, constituted her an heiress. Not long afterwards he saw her happily married to Lord Inchiquin, and the Earl and his Countess, residing at beautiful Cliefden in the neighbourhood, remained on the most friendly and intimate terms with the family at Beaconsfield, although the members of that family, after being so many years united in love and peace together, were soon to depart one after another, and that house which had so long been the abode of cheerfulness and happiness to be changed into an abode of sorrow and mourning.

The shadow was already falling about Burke's life. The death of Johnson, followed at last by the death of Reynolds, left gaps which could never again be filled up. Even the separation from his political friends was only the precursor of sadder separations, which were speedily to occur.



His life seemed changed. In the mere party combats in the House of Commons he had lost all interest ; and seldom was he seen in his accustomed place. During the whole session he only addressed the House twice ; once, on a notice of motion made by Grey on the question of Parliamentary Reform, and once on a motion made by Fox for repealing certain penal statutes of which the Unitarians complained as interfering with their religious opinions.

On both questions he was opposed to his late friends. On the twenty-sixth of April a meeting of gentlemen was held at the Freemasons' Tavern. They had, on the eleventh of the same month, formed themselves into a Society, with the very pretentious title, The Friends of the People ; and they published a document, signed by each of the members individually, declaring the principles of their association. These were, as they said, to restore the freedom of election, and a more equal representation of the people ; and also to shorten the duration of Parliament. They also issued an Address to the People of Great Britain, still more elaborately explaining their ideas ; and informing them of a resolution they had passed unanimously for a motion in favour of Reform, to be brought forward in the next session of Parliament by Grey, and seconded by Erskine. The names appended to the declarations were those of most of the distinguished members of Opposition. Grey, Erskine, Sheridan, Francis, Baker, Piggot, Lampton, Sawbridge, Byng, Tierney, were all men of political eminence. Fox did not enrol himself as a member of the confederation, that he might render his friends more effectual assistance as an independent statesman, than as an avowed member of their body.\*

\* See Parliamentary History, vol. xxix. p. 1330.

In accordance with the resolutions of this Society, Grey gave his notice of bringing the subject of Parliamentary Reform forward by a direct motion in the following session. As the alarm which Burke had first expressed about the proceedings of democratic clubs and confederations was gradually taking possession of the minds of the great majority of Englishmen, Grey's notice of motion excited much interest, and produced a warm debate in the House of Commons.

The whole discussion was indeed irregular in the extreme. Having been begun by Grey telling the House what he intended next session to do, it was continued by the Premier, who rose, and declared what he at the same time would do. This of course called up Fox as the leader of Opposition, who taunted Pitt with his inconsistencies, and argued strongly for the necessity of reform. When Fox had sat down, the Speaker, Addington, reminded the House that there was no motion before it; but intimated his readiness, if the House wished the discussion to go on, to allow it to proceed. Burke then rose. His appearance was somewhat a novelty, and he was listened to with the deepest attention. He said, and truly said, that there were now very few subjects on which he felt inclined to speak in the House of Commons. He was an old man; and he wished for rest. He had been also distinctly advised by those with whom he had long acted, to retire; and, doubtless, he ought to profit by the warning. As an invalid, he could only perform garrison duty; but still that duty he would, while compelled to remain at his post, endeavour to do with satisfaction to himself and profit to his country. He strongly condemned the formation of the society called The Friends of the People, because they had admitted

into it men of the most violent and democratic political opinions, and, in particular, many of the members of the clubs that had gone out of their way to make common cause with the French Revolutionists. The beginners of innovation never saw the end. At that time there could be no such thing as a temperate Reform. He then referred to Paine's Rights of Man, which Pitt had affirmed to be a libel on the Constitution. A libel indeed it was, said Burke, and could be praised and circulated only by those who were the avowed enemies of the Constitution. Paine had been called a foreigner, a stranger, neither an Englishman, nor a Frenchman, nor an American. But the truest description of him was, that he was a man who knew just enough of all countries to confuse and distract them all, without being of the least use to any. He, and men like him, the supporters of the movement for reform, had entered into an avowed federation with the club of the Jacobins at Paris. They had presented an address to that democratic club, of which Robespierre was the chief, so recently as the sixteenth of that very month; and the Jacobins in reply had thought fit to look upon them as the authorized representatives of the whole English people. Was this a time, then, to encourage wild and visionary schemes of innovation? The storm was raging around, and it was the duty of all patriots to unite and preserve the constitution.\*

Windham followed, supporting with much eloquence similar views. Lord North, now old and blind, also rose, and said a few words against the scheme. Dundas, of course, having in 1785 been induced by Pitt to support his plan of reform, again, in obedience to the example set by his friend the Prime Minister, declared himself

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxix. p. 1317.

against Grey's proposed motion, and reprehended with much asperity Paine's Rights of Man, and the Associations which were extending over the country, avowedly to carry out the doctrines that book contained. Fox rose again, and, defending the Friends of the People, said that he might dislike Paine's publication; but he certainly disliked Burke's Reflections quite as much, though they might both do some good by provoking discussion. This declaration was quite uncalled for, and was anything but kind. Burke, though estranged from Fox, was even then labouring to bring about a union between him and the Ministers, that Fox and the Duke of Portland might enter office with Pitt; and that at such a crisis, the statesmen on both sides might join in carrying on the government. It would have been well for England if such an arrangement could at that time have been effected. Burke would have been the most fitting mediator. In subsequent years Pitt himself saw the desirability of this union. It was Fox's own conduct in this and the following year, that, at least while Burke lived, rendered the project he had first entertained quite hopeless.\*

To Fox's motion for the repeal of the penal statutes which unintentionally subjected the Unitarians to inconvenience, Burke was decided in his opposition. He said it was a question of time and circumstances, and in that time and in those circumstances he could not consent to remove restraints from those who, as their patriarch Dr. Priestley openly declared, sought to destroy the Established Church. It was idle to talk about an alliance between Church and State. There was no such thing. Church and State were one and the same, because there

\* See Observations on the Conduct of the Minority.

could be no Church without the laity being regarded as the second, and an integral part of a single whole. Pitt, like Burke, opposed the motion, and it was of course rejected. The Opposition were of course much annoyed, and bitterly accused Burke of inconsistency. He certainly exaggerated the dangers to which the Church was exposed from the attacks of Dr. Priestley and his Unitarians, and the consciousness of his son's efforts in favour of the Catholics in Ireland ought to have restrained him, whatever might be his dislike to Priestley and the Unitarians, from opposing through temporary considerations that relief which, on principle, could scarcely be denied. His conduct on this motion, as in the preceding year on the Test Act, was not worthy of him as a statesman, so far-seeing, so comprehensive, so desirous of seeing religious freedom established throughout every portion of the British dominions. It is melancholy to find this great champion of toleration so far led away by his antipathies and his apprehensions, as to seek, a few weeks after he had composed his noble Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe, to persuade himself and others that on religious subjects "a reasonable, prudent, and moderate coercion may be a means of preventing acts of extreme ferocity and rigour."\*

He seems to have been conscious that in voting against this motion, his conduct might be liable to reprehension from those whose respect and approbation he was desirous of securing. Either before or after the debate he therefore committed to paper portions of this speech, which, being preserved among his papers, has been published among his works. If anything could excuse the smallest degree of intolerance, it would be such an

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iv. p. 56.

oration. Never did illiberality assume a more liberal form. Independent of the object to which it is applied, none of Burke's compositions can be read with greater pleasure and admiration; the eloquence of the language, the beauty of the imagery, and the philosophy of the disquisition on Churches and sects, and their treatment by politicians, being all singularly striking and profound.

Fox, in reply, directed most of his observations at Burke. No traces of their old friendship were visible in his speech. On the contrary, all was severe and acrimonious. The leader of the Opposition had some reason for blaming Burke for opposing the motion before the House; but it was wantonly offensive in him to couple, still more strongly than in the former debate, Paine's Rights of Man and Burke's Reflections together, and declare that if the one was, as it had been called, a libel on the Constitution of Great Britain, the other was a libel on every free constitution in the world. With all respect to Fox, such language can only be considered childish and petulant. No page from the Reflections can ever be quoted as libelling any free constitution that then existed, or had ever existed. But to this had the disagreement between Fox and Burke now come.\*

Besides the two particular questions on which alone Burke addressed the House in the session of 1792, another subject came before it, in which he could scarcely be considered a passive spectator. Stimulated by the friendly admonitions of Wilberforce, the Ministers introduced certain resolutions intended to lead the way to the gradual abolition of the African slave-trade. To Dundas, who had officially charge of the business, Burke, previous to the time appointed, sent his old Sketch of

\* Parliamentary History, vol. xxix. p. 1402.

a Negro Code, drawn up in 1780, and gladly permitted him to make all the use of them he thought fit, without any thanks or acknowledgment. In both Houses the question was fully discussed ; and Wilberforce and Burke had reason for congratulating themselves on the progress this cause of justice, civilization, and philanthropy was steadily making against all the obstacles opposed to it by prejudice, ignorance, and interestedness.

Another great cause, in Burke's estimation, equally that of justice, civilization, and philanthropy, was far from advancing with equal rapidity, and indeed seemed almost retrogressing. At the beginning of the year he had hoped that the trial of Hastings would be brought to a close with the termination of the session. The business was pushed forward by Burke with much vigour ; but it soon appeared that there was no chance of concluding it by the time he had expected. Hastings entered on his defence. The orations of his counsel rivalled that of the Managers for the Commons in length, though he had so loudly complained of the time they consumed. Law's opening speech took up three days ; and he spoke for more hours in those three days than Burke had done during the four in which he delivered his great introductory oration. Plumer, before the judges went on circuit, had spent other three days on the defence against the Benares charge, and had scarcely gone half through the narrative, before he had actually occupied more time than both Fox and Grey had done together, when they brought forward that particular portion of the prosecution. Nor was the spirit of those orations any compensation for their length. Burke, Fox, and Sheridan were all distinguished orators ; and even their most determined opponents in the impeachment could not but listen to

what they said with admiration. But Law and Plumer were mere lawyers. Their speeches were the speeches of mere lawyers. Both the Lords and the spectators soon became heartily weary of elaborate forensic harangues, sometimes, indeed, ably argumentative, but unilluminated by wit, imagination, or eloquence. Instead of the crowds of beauty and fashion which, during the speeches of the Managers, had so gaily lit up the Hall, Fox and Burke, as they sat gloomily together, bowing stiffly to each other, and speaking with formal politeness, beheld only a dull succession of empty benches. There was only one subject on which the two statesmen seemed to agree. Fox took the opportunity while Burke and he were sitting near each other, to tell his old friend how much he admired the Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe, and how much he wished both the father and son success in their efforts to remove the disabilities of the Roman Catholics. But Burke complained grievously of the delay which Hastings and his counsel seemed to throw in the way of the conclusion of the trial; and, in writing to Richard, he declared that it seemed to be their plan to make, from mere weariness, spectators, Lords, and Managers, run away from Westminster Hall altogether.\*

In fact, this was nearly the case. The session came to an end; but the conclusion of the trial seemed just as far off as ever.

Richard again returned to England. Every thing had not prospered as he wished at the other side of St. George's Channel. He had more difficulties with Irish officials and Irish patriots, than even with the princes and emigrants at Coblenz. This was his first serious essay as a politician, and he was most anxious to acquit

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 426.



himself well. He was all for business. Though in the season of youth, and unmarried, he scarcely condescended to attend the balls of the Castle, and appeared to shun all fashionable and feminine society. His father even quietly hinted to him, that it might be better if he would more frequently show himself in drawing-rooms and assembly-rooms. But the beauties of Dublin had for him few fascinations. Besides, as he well knew, and, doubtless, as most of the scheming mothers knew, he was no great catch. It was a fine thing, doubtless, to be Edmund Burke's son; but to the prudent matrons, who prided themselves in bringing their handsome daughters to the assemblies of the Lord Lieutenant, it was much finer to have in prospective an unencumbered rent-roll, and at least ten or fifteen thousand a year. The consciousness of his poverty rendered the young man prouder and shyer than ever. His life was a life of hopes and dreams which were never to be realized. Believing that he possessed great intellectual powers, and knowing that he possessed many virtues, he occasionally felt sad and depressed as he contrasted his position with that of the sons of statesmen whose genius and services were not inferior to his father's. The son of Henry Fox was the leader of Opposition, and, before he attained Richard's age, had been twice Secretary of State. The son of Chatham, though younger than Richard, had been uninterruptedly eight years Prime Minister, and the undisputed leader of the House of Commons. Richard was the son of Burke; and yet for him nothing was offered or seemed to offer. At thirty-four years of age his life had yet almost to begin. A poor man, and the son of a poor man, the ordinary walks of ambition were as if designedly closed

against him ; and the virtues of the father were like so many sins visited upon the son. For him there were no official honours. For him there were no comfortable sinecures. The present was dark, and the future looked darker. It seemed almost incredible, and yet it is a fact, that the doors of Carlton House were again closed to Burke. The Prince of Wales had been persuaded by his flatterers, that the defence of the inheritable, nature of the Crown in the Reflections was a slight to himself, and particularly because no notice had been taken of his Royal Highness's claim to the Regency.\* On this ridiculous suggestion, in which Sheridan's malice may very clearly be discerned, the Prince treated Burke with coldness and reserve ; and poor Richard, after having long been kept down owing to his father's opposition to the policy of the reigning sovereign, had, in his father's opinion, only too much reason for dreading the personal hostility of the heir apparent in years to come.

Nor was he in reality on much better terms with the Ministers of the day. After having tacitly disapproved of his journey to Coblenz, and declined to employ him in any diplomatic capacity, they seem equally to have been displeased with him for acting as the agent of the Irish Roman Catholics. They felt him to be extremely intrusive and troublesome. No sooner did they lose sight of him in one character, than he appeared in another ; and in each character he interfered with business which they regarded as peculiarly their own. At Dublin, as at Coblenz, it was all the same. He pestered Dundas with letters very able, very statesmanlike, and very long ; and the shrewd and time-serving Lord Advocate generally put them into his waste-paper basket,

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 400.

without troubling himself to master their contents. Burke's own earnest representations on the state of Ireland the Ministers were obliged respectfully to tolerate. But Dundas, before Richard left London for Dublin, while he was in Ireland, and again when he returned to enforce personally the claims of the Catholics, repeatedly declined to treat with him at all, and refused to receive any communications on Irish affairs except through the medium of the Lord Lieutenant. At this Richard was displeased. He was not regarded by the advisers of the Viceroy with any more favour than by the Ministers in Downing Street. Political agitation was then a novelty. Agents for Roman Catholic Associations were looked upon with astonishment and displeasure. Richard, honest, well intentioned, and really sagacious, was thwarted by all the creatures of the Castle ; his actions were misrepresented, his counsels disregarded, his motives jealously scrutinized ; and every opportunity was taken for putting upon him a slight, if not a direct insult. Perhaps, after all, he was not such an accomplished tactician as he prided himself on being. He had a gentler temper than his father ; but he had his father's earnestness and impetuosity, and, like his father, he laid himself open to be deceived and misrepresented by men whose zeal was not so pure as his own. The Irish Government, of which Hobart, who had been at Westminster School with Richard, was Chief Secretary, made use of those lukewarm and only half-sincere politicians who called themselves moderate men. Richard and the Committee, who had appointed him their agent, were in some danger of being disavowed. The newspapers, both in England and Ireland, even on one occasion stated, much to the surprise of Burke and his family, that their darling had been taken into custody.

He certainly committed a curious breach of parliamentary etiquette. While in Dublin during the spring, he drew up a petition in favour of his clients, and prevailed on a certain Irish Member, called Horn, to present it to the corrupt Commons on College Green. The intolerant majority, feeling that the power which they had so long abused was slipping away from them, were more turbulent than usual. Horn at last lost his head amid the noise, and altogether misstated the meaning of the petition. Richard, in the hurry and excitement of the moment, being anxious to set him right, stepped a few paces beyond the bar, and found himself in the body of the House. Cries of "A stranger in the House!" and "Take him into custody!" were loudly vociferated. Richard made a hasty retreat. He waited outside however until the House broke up, and the Members who had shouted the loudest against him seemed somewhat ashamed of their conduct as they passed by him at the door. This incident, as it really occurred, he communicated in a letter to William Burke, in India; and it will be found to have been, both at the time and subsequently, very much misrepresented.\*

In the letter from his uncle William, to which Richard then replied, he alluded to some hints that William had given to him about getting married. Burke himself, during the summer, in thanking the King of Poland for a medal that Stanislaus Augustus had presented to him, alluded confidently to his posterity as likely to be proud of the royal gift. It has, therefore, been often asked, why Richard was not settled sooner, since all hopes of leaving direct representatives of the family depended upon himself, and yet he still at such a mature age remained a bachelor, apparently without the slightest in-

\* See Richard's Letter to William Burke, *Corresp.*, vol. iii. p. 496.

tention of changing his condition? The explanation is not easy. A romantic tale has been told about his falling in love with a young lady, who had been brought up as an humble companion and friend of his mother and whom he had known from childhood. He was induced, it has been said, dutifully to give up all hopes of this union by the representations of his parents, who pointed out to him his idol's poverty and his own narrow means; and as the young lady afterwards married, Richard, in the spirit of chivalry, remained constant to her memory, and resolutely determined never to wed another.\* This is a very pretty story; but, unfortunately, it is somewhat fabulous. Richard, even at this time, as his letter to his uncle William proves, considered himself quite a marrying man, and hoped to leave successors behind him as the representatives of the family. "As to the other matters you interest yourself about," he wrote to William, "I have often reproached myself with. But I do not know that it is entirely my own fault. You must recollect something of our circumstances of life, which make my choice in many respects limited; but that, too, may come in its time."

William Burke, when Richard thus wrote to him, had been in India as Paymaster for more than ten years. The employment he had so long held was of a lucrative description; and, as a bachelor, he had only his personal expenses to meet. A man of real ability, of many accomplishments, and as Edmund believed of the highest virtues, he might justly have been expected to make his way in the world. Everything promised well. In his early manhood a Member of Parliament and an Under-Secretary of State, he had at first outstripped his friend

\* Peter Burke, p. 284.

and kinsman in the race for political eminence. He had magnanimously resigned office rather than desert the Rockingham party; and had in this manner given a testimony of fidelity to principles which few politicians of that day, and certainly not the jobbers of the Bedford and Grenville schools, with whom he has been classed, ever thought of showing. From that time however everything had gone wrong with William, and his life had been a failure. He lost the money he acquired by his speculations in Indian stock. He lost his seat in Parliament. He went to India to seek a fortune he did not obtain. As the agent of the Rajah of Tanjore he had been once in England and had again returned to India. Many opportunities he must have had of acquiring emolument; but the wealth for which he constantly stretched out his hand vanished at his touch. As Indian Paymaster he did little better. Anglo-Indian after Anglo-Indian had returned home before him with large fortunes, the fruit sometimes of industry, sometimes of peculation, and sometimes of extortion. But William Burke at sixty years of age, and in declining health, had still not secured ample means for retirement. In fact he was, as the testimony of his contemporaries shows, a man of expensive tastes, very careless and extravagant in pecuniary matters, and perhaps not over scrupulous in the means by which he sought to relieve wants which were constantly pressing. He had long been a needy man, and he suffered from the common prejudices against needy men. The Governor-General, Lord Cornwallis, complained frequently of William Burke's unreasonable importunity; and he seems to have had some reason for his complaints. Still it must not be forgotten, in reading the remarks let fall on the subject by the

Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief, that during nearly all this period he was officially connected with the political opponents of the India Bill and the Coalition, and that he was not likely to remark too favourably on the proceedings of any one who had been made Paymaster by the enemies of Pitt and Dundas, and who, especially during the time of the prosecution of Hastings, could boast of any relationship with Edmund Burke. William Burke may not have shown himself entirely free from a desire to acquire wealth by means which strict official purity could scarcely countenance, though not severely censure. It was doubtless a grievous sin. He tried to do, unsuccessfully, what most of those who then went out to India did successfully. It was an edifying spectacle to find the supporters of Paul Benfield and the rest of the Nabob of Arcot's creditors, smitten with horror at William Burke because he sought, and sought in vain, to enrich himself by the percentages on certain army remittances. Lord Cornwallis's Indian campaigns made the fortune of many persons connected with them; but they certainly did not make the fortune of the Paymaster. Peace had been just concluded, and the spoils of the war do not appear, as Edmund intimated in a letter written at the same time as that of his son, to have been shared by William. More than forty years had gone since the two friends, then very young men, had rambled over the south and west of England together, dreaming of future greatness, and looking with interest on all that the English provincial life of that day presented to their observation. They were now old, had undergone many vicissitudes, had experienced very different fortunes, and were in very different circumstances. Edmund was at the height of literary, and the height of political

fame ; William, an obscure Anglo-Indian, whose name in England had been quite forgotten. Their friendship was however as warm as ever, and what Burke had felt for his kinsman he had also taught his son to feel. Richard began his letter to his uncle William with, "My dearest Friend," and Burke himself, in concluding his letter to the same beloved and absent relative, wrote, "My ever dear friend, God bring you safely to us ! May we have one cheerful winter's evening, at the close of our short day, before we go to bed !—Adieu ! Adieu ! You are in my heart to its last beat ; so you are with us all."\*

The deep sense of obligation to William, expressed by Burke from the outset of his public life, had in no respect diminished with the lapse of time. It is evident that he still looked upon his kinsman as the friend who, above all others, had contributed to get him connected with Lord Rockingham, and returned to Parliament. It is evident that the remembrance of pecuniary assistance at the time when he needed it most, particularly when he purchased his estate at Beaconsfield, was not at all extinguished ; and that, whatever may have been William's errors and misfortunes, the heart of the statesman still gladdened at the prospect of once more meeting William at his own hearth in their common old-age. Recently, a theory has been started, which, if it could be established, would prove that there was also a still more secret bond uniting the two kinsmen, and account for much of the sympathy they showed with each other. Another claimant has been put forward by an ingenious advocate for the honours of the authorship of Junius's letters in the person of William Burke.† I dissent with regret from a gen-

\* 'Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 522.

† William Burke the Author of Junius. By Jellinger C. Symons.



tleman who, as a literary controversialist, has treated me personally with much courtesy. This is not the place to argue the question ; nor is much argument perhaps necessary. The reasons which go so far to demonstrate that Burke himself was not, and could not be, Junius, apply in every respect, and with much stronger force, against his relative William. It may be at once allowed that there was no difference whatever between the politics of Edmund and William Burke, and that they laboured with common means to a common end ; but it is to disregard the evidence of the first, and every one of these celebrated letters, to base a claim to their authorship on the ground that their politics and the politics of Burke and his Rockingham party were identical. Junius was at first the devoted supporter of Grenville, and afterwards the enthusiastic panegyrist of Lord Chatham and the fierce assailant of Lord Mansfield ; but he never was, as has been supposed, the champion of Lord Rockingham, nor of the political principles of which Burke was the powerful assertor.\*

Richard Burke the elder was still practising his profession as a barrister on the western circuit, and attending to the duties of his recordership at Bristol. He had been little more successful in life than William. Briefs had not flowed in with any great abundance ; his home was still, as it had ever been, at Beaconsfield, and wherever Burke and his family might reside during the London season. But pleasant and humorous Dick's health was fast declining. He had only recently been labouring under a severe indisposition, and though, much to the joy of Burke, his wife, and his son, he had gradually rallied, yet was his constitution shaken to its foundations,

\* See vol. i. p. 493.

and he continued a mere valetudinarian. He was however still more than cheerful. His gay and rattling spirit was not broken by disease. He had shed many tears for the loss of his friend Sir Joshua Reynolds, who loved him, Richard Burke the younger, and Mrs. Burke, almost as much as he did Edmund himself.\* From the shock of that loss he had however recovered, and still joyously looked towards the future.

Richard and the whole family, when in town, frequently visited at Mrs. Crewe's. Their social circle had indeed not diminished by the quarrel between Burke and the party under Fox's leadership; and though Mrs. Crewe's husband was a Whig, and she still so much a Whig toast, this beautiful, amiable, and accomplished lady courageously defended Burke even against their common friends on the Opposition benches. She and Mrs. Burke were on the most intimate terms; they had a mutual sympathy and respect for each other; and even a Philip Francis associated them together as models of all that was good, gentle, and refined in that sex which they adorned. Mrs. Crewe had a suburban villa at Hampstead, where Burke was frequently seen, and where he was made the centre of an admiring circle, as Dr. Johnson had been at Mrs. Montague's and Mrs. Thrale's.

There this summer he met Miss Burney, who having been released, just alive, from her laborious duties as a maid of honour, had become much more reasonable and tolerant. She was, of course, quite in raptures with Burke and all that he had written on the French Revolution. So also was her kind and amiable father. Dr. Burney had always been a Tory of the mildest indeed, but also of the purest kind: the orthodox Dr. Johnson had been

\* See Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 425.

to him as venerable as St. Paul's Cathedral ; and now, in his later life, he gave all his allegiance to Burke, as the champion of monarchy and religion against republicanism and atheism. At last the duties of private friendship and political principles were no longer incompatible. At last it was no longer a sin for a sincere Tory to admire Burke. To read his writings was now with the Doctor the highest intellectual gratification, and occasionally to converse with him, his most cherished privilege. At Mrs. Crewe's Dr. Burney and his daughter often met Burke, and they hung upon his words as on those of an inspired oracle. Miss Burney heard Burke at Hampstead advocate earnestly the project he had entertained of uniting all parties to meet the common danger ; and on being reminded that the junction between Fox and Pitt would seem somewhat extraordinary, she listened attentively to his significant reply, " Why not this as well as other Coalitions ? "

During one of those afternoons Erskine and his wife, from their neighbouring villa, walked in ; and Burke, who had been talking very pleasantly, felt himself ill at ease. The great advocate was, in his own opinion, a great man, and such he wished himself everywhere to be regarded. He was full of his own achievements, and especially of his recent defences of the democratic agitators, whom the Ministers, with Burke's approval, but with questionable wisdom, had put upon their trial. Erskine was all for " the people." It was necessary to do something, he told Mrs. Crewe and her guests, for " the people." He was however somewhat disconcerted by the amiable hostess, who quietly intimated her wish to know, adopting the ideas Burke had thrown out in his Appeal from the Old to the New Whigs, what was meant by that vague phrase " the people." Erskine saw

that his politics and his presence were not so welcome as he had supposed, and soon afterwards beat a precipitate retreat, much to the delight of Miss Burney and others, of whom Burke was the idolized prophet.

And indeed they had in the summer and autumn of 1792 much reason for their idolatry. The outrageous, bloody, and ferocious scenes which followed each other, surpassed all that had gone before them, and justified the wildest declamations of Burke on the sin, the iniquity, and the horrors of such a Revolution. The Swiss guards massacred, the French Royal Family conducted to the prison of the Temple, and the deliberate butchery of hundreds and even thousands of human beings by the pikes and sabres of the mob, who constituted themselves at once the judges and the executioners of their miserable prisoners in the Abbaye, Le Châtelet, and La Force, stand out almost without a parallel in atrocity, except indeed, and it is a most important consideration, in French history alone. Humanity shudders at those deeds. They baffle all description. The paramount feeling they excite, on perusing the different accounts so many years afterwards, is astonishment, that such things could be done in any city of the world. It is absurd to say that these massacres of August, and still more of September, were the logical consequences of the tyranny of the French sovereigns and the French aristocracy before the Revolution, or that they were the natural results of the panic into which the people of Paris had been thrown by the news of the invasion of the allied forces under the Duke of Brunswick. The humbler classes undoubtedly suffered most grievously under Louis XIV. and his successors; but notwithstanding the philosophy which Mr. Carlyle brought into fashion by his

celebrated book, and which other writers, both in verse and prose, in history and fiction, have with little meaning repeated, it may be fairly questioned whether this balance of crimes can ever properly be struck. There seems little reason, and less morality, in endeavouring thus to look with complacency on the dastardly murders of the *Sep-tembriseurs*. They could only have been committed by a people whose nature under certain circumstances was singularly bloodthirsty and cruel; of a people whom Voltaire, thinking of what they had done in other times, epigrammatically characterized as a compound of the monkey and the tiger. Englishmen may justly pride themselves that, even during their civil wars, when the fiercest passions were roused into the most deadly hostility, their history is not stained with any massacres committed by even the lowest classes of the populace. The fact, as Hume who wrote on the great contest between Charles I. and his Parliament with so little sympathy or appreciation, is obliged to admit, speaks volumes for the intrinsic goodness of the national character. In French history it is just the contrary: and by no logic, nor philosophy, transcendental or otherwise, can the stain which such deeds have imprinted on the French character be effaced.

This was at least the point of view from which Burke judged of those horrible events in the August and September of this year. He could not see why, because the ancestors of some Frenchmen had endured misery and oppression from the great, or because the Duke of Brunswick had taken Langres, was preparing to take Verdun, and seemed to be within a few days' march of Paris; or because from the beginning of the world men had killed each other in battles and sieges, that therefore hundreds

of prisoners, aged priests and beautiful women were, one by one, to be taken to the prison-gates and massacred in cold blood. The atrocious murder and frightful mutilation of the charming Princesse de Lamballe could scarcely have been perpetrated anywhere else but in Paris, though the degradation and suffering of millions of human beings have in all ages been lamentable enough. The people of other great capitals, before European civilization and the Christian religion were known in the world, have had more formidable enemies than the Duke of Brunswick and the King of Prussia at their very gates, and yet have not disgraced themselves and their posterity, as well as the human nature which we share in common, by cowardly murders and indiscriminate massacres. When the Spanish Armada approached the British shores, when the Dutch fleet sailed up the Thames, when the news came that the naval battle of Beachy Head was most disgracefully lost, when Prince Charles Edward and his Highland clans advanced to Derby, when the combined fleets of France and Spain chased the English squadron up the Channel, when the camp of Napoleon threatened England from the heights of Boulogne, even the lowest classes of London, ignorant and besotted as they were, never showed the slightest thirst for the blood of rulers who had in many instances made themselves odious by pride, treachery, incapacity, and tyranny. Even the riotous excesses of the mob at Birmingham in the preceding year, when the houses of the sympathizers with the French Jacobins were attacked, originated in feelings which can scarcely be condemned; and Priestley, however obnoxious he had made himself both on account of his religious tenets and political principles, was in no danger of being summarily hanged upon a lamp-post.

The crimes of September horrified all the English people, except a few theoretical democrats. As each phase of the Revolution became more bloody, Burke and his writings became the objects of more enthusiastic admiration. "What foresight!" the great majority exclaimed, "And what wisdom!" They looked upon him with that veneration to which Grattan, in this respect far superior to the prejudices of many of his countrymen and his friends among the English Whigs, afterwards gave utterance regarding Burke: "The Prodigy both of Nature and of Acquisition: he read everything, he knew everything, he saw everything, he foresaw everything." Many of the earliest champions of the Revolution had grown ashamed of their partiality, and were transferring their admiration to the statesman whom they had regarded as a renegade. They confessed, as Mackintosh, the youngest, the most philosophical, and the ablest of the opponents of the Reflections, afterwards observed on visiting France, when complimented for what he had done in their cause by the French Republicans: "Gentlemen, you have very well refuted me."\* Hence Burke's name became a kind of catchword with nearly all the respectable classes; and hatred of the Revolution and the crimes of the Revolutionists the orthodox political faith, in which it was an impious heresy to disbelieve. It is easy to see the intolerant extremes to which the violent antipathy to the French democracy drove many of those who had hitherto passed for moderate politicians. It is much wiser to endeavour to recognize how much sterling good there was in those anti-Jacobin prejudices, how much horror of cruelty, indignation at injustice, ardent patriotism, respect for order, and devotion to English altars

\* Memoir of Sir James Mackintosh, by his Son.

and English homes. Such prejudices, founded on the most solid virtues, have more than anything else contributed to make England what she is, and yet will be.

Richard Burke went again in the autumn to the scene of his duties in Ireland. The correspondence between the father and the son was as full and as affectionate as ever. Burke confessed that every day, as he read in the newspapers during the September the accounts of the horrors which were being committed in Paris, he became quite sick ; and that it was some time before he could recover himself, and go about his daily occupations.\*

Though his beloved Richard was absent, Beaconsfield, to the aged statesman, was still pleasant and cheerful. His niece, Mary French, had not yet married Captain Haviland, the son of the old General at Penn from whom Burke had gaily stolen the buckskins to equip one of the strolling players : but the Captain frequently visiting Beaconsfield, and occasionally staying at the house of a relative in the town, contributed much to the cheerfulness of the neighbourhood. Miss Palmer, Sir Joshua's niece, had now married the Earl of Inchiquin ; and they rendered the vicinity more agreeable. The Havilands, the Inchiquins, and the Burkes, soon almost made but one family, of which Burke and his wife were at the head, at once loving and beloved.

At this time Reynolds's collection of pictures were for sale. His niece wished Burke to write a notice of the gallery, in much the same terms as the character which he had written for the newspapers immediately after Sir Joshua's death. Burke, knowing that he had already said all that he had to say, and not wishing to repeat himself, thought the request rather troublesome. " You,"

\* Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 1.



he wrote to the newly-married Countess, "who have a good taste must know that these things cannot be repeated for ever from the same mind without forcing it, and consequently producing something paltry and affected, which will do more harm than good. There remains to me perhaps to write his epitaph. Believe me, this kind of things cannot be diversified without end; and if they were to be so diversified, I am not fit for it, who am used only to have some substantial matter of praise or blame to express, according to my powers, with force and clearness; and as to mere compliments or pretty-turned phrases, I never had any hand at them." He enclosed, however, a few forcible sentences on the pictures, telling Lady Inchiquin to take them, such as they were, as a poor testimony of love and gratitude to the memory of his lost friend.

In September he sustained another loss that afflicted him more deeply even than the loss of Sir Joshua. At the time when all the furies of hell appeared to be let loose in Paris, and the demons of anarchy and massacre were gorged with blood, Burke received at Beaconsfield a letter bearing an Irish postmark, informing him that his oldest and dearest friend, his associate and companion in his school and college days, Richard Shackleton, had closed a peaceful and happy life by a peaceful and happy death. The statesman shed many tears. All the past, even from his boyish days, was brought vividly back to him; and he thought of the annual visits which Shackleton had recently paid to him, and the comfort they had been. He endeavoured to console himself by dwelling on the virtues of him who had gone for ever; and committed the results of his meditations to paper, in the form of a letter to Richard's daughter, Mary, now Mrs.

Leadbeater, who had written to him about her father's death. Burke's reply was indeed a beautiful character of Shackleton, drawn by the hand of friendship and coloured with sensibility and genius. It shows us what kind of man Shackleton was ; why he was loved by Burke ; and what there was in Burke's own character to sympathize so heartily with one whose life was in many respects such a contrast to his own.\*

Reynolds taken in February, Shackleton in September, who would be the next of Burke's circle to be summoned suddenly away ? It almost seemed that Mrs. Burke herself, who was to survive them all for many years, would be the first of the family to go. Her lameness had returned, and the nervous depression of spirits under which she suffered gave her husband much anxiety. She thought of that only son who had just again arrived in Ireland, and the mother was disturbed by apprehensions which were, alas ! not imaginary. Dr. Brocklesby advised Burke to take her to try the Bath waters ; and they were packing up previous to their departure for that fashionable town, when the news of Shackleton's death arrived.

\* Correspondence, vol. iii. p. 534.

## CHAPTER XLII.

1792-1794.

## "THE BLOODY HAND ON HIGH."

To Bath Burke and his wife went by short stages a few days afterwards. The journey was not a pleasant one. The statesman's mind was burdened by many cares, both domestic and political. His wife's health was very bad; he had fears lest she might never recover; it was very uncertain whether or not the Bath waters would do her good. His son was in Ireland struggling with difficulties which it was not possible for any human ability to surmount. His brother Richard too was absent, though he had promised to join them at Bath. Burke's nervous susceptibility had also been excited to the highest pitch by the September massacres, which had followed so closely the massacre of the Swiss on the tenth of August. Bad as he had considered the French Revolution to be, the cruelty and barbarity of the miscreants who were gradually becoming omnipotent in Paris, could not but exceed even his worst anticipations. At the present time it is difficult to read in cold blood all the shocking murders perpetrated in those horrible September days in Paris; it is not easy to imagine what effect the accounts, with all their exaggerations, produced in the mind of a man like Burke, whose hatred of cruelty and bloodshed was so intense. "The fire and blood"

through which he had, in 1790, prophesied that the Revolution would pass, had indeed come with a vengeance. The clergy of France fled from their country in flocks. In Jersey alone, according to Burke's calculation, there were five thousand refugees, of whom two thousand were priests; and to London there came also thousands of priests, and some nineteen bishops and archbishops. For all these miserable outcasts food and shelter were to be found. Before leaving London Burke's exertions in the cause had been indefatigable. Though he could ill spare the money, he subscribed liberally himself; set the subscription-list to work among his friends; and by his example and influence induced the charitable in England to come forward with their contributions. In Bath he did not remit his efforts in the good work until the subscription-list became a great national testimony against atheism, anarchy, confiscation, and murder.

Nor at Bath did he relax his exertions to influence the English Ministers and the most influential politicians to take a decided part in favour of the royal cause. He persisted in believing that good, and much good, might arise from the armed intervention of England, though he did not pause to consider whether, in the event of such an intervention taking place, it would be carried out exactly in accordance with his own ideas. After the tenth of August, Lord Gower, the English ambassador, had left Paris, and it was generally understood that he would not return. The step, which Burke had formerly advised was at last taken; and Lord Grenville, the Foreign Secretary, in answer to a private letter, assured Burke that he fully agreed with him as to the object the Government ought to have in view with respect to their foreign policy, though he might differ with him about

the means.\* On receipt of this communication Burke anxiously considered how he could still more effectively impress his views on those who were nominally directing the course of English policy.

To his great relief Mrs. Burke from the day of her arrival in Bath began to feel much better: her lameness gradually became less troublesome; and she steadily increased in health and spirits. Burke was unexpectedly summoned to attend at Bulstrode a private installation of his friend and the leader of his party, the Duke of Portland, as Lord Chancellor of the University of Oxford. He left his wife at Bath, returned for a few days to town, and then rejoined her, to his great joy finding her on his return almost quite recovered. At Bath he wrote another half diplomatic and half political treatise, entitled *Heads for Consideration on the Present State of Affairs*. It was printed and circulated without his name; but the internal evidence alone was sufficiently conclusive as to the authorship. The hopes of the allied sovereigns had been deceived; their vaunts had become ridiculously futile. The activity of Dumouriez, the autumnal rains, and the slopes and passes of Argonne, had stopped the march of Brunswick and his German legions. The fortunate moment passed away. Negotiation, artifice, and distrust succeeded, and the common cause of kings seemed almost given up by his Prussian Majesty, who had at first been so loud in his boasts, promises, and protestations. Since the offensive alliance against French Jacobinism had failed, could there not be a defensive alliance more successful for the same purpose, and an armed cordon drawn round the French frontiers to prevent the propagation of French principles? These were for the moment the

\* Correspondence, vol iii. p. 533.

dreams of German diplomatists. Burke laughed heartily at their hallucinations. "Well," he confessed to his son, "of the two madnesses, the madness of the French rabble is the more noble ! An alliance of which the *casus fœderis* is sophistic maxims ! a league of princes against bad syllogisms !—' I am weary of conjectures !' " \*

He was not so weary as he supposed. The Heads for Consideration on the Present State of Affairs shows him more anxious for the sovereigns of Europe than they were for themselves. No disappointment, mortification, treachery, nor defeat, could subdue the interest with which he watched and speculated on the great events of the world in which he lived. It was the political philosopher looking on the moral phenomena around him as the natural philosopher on the scientific facts which came before his eyes, and from which he sought to deduce a general law ; and Burke's conclusions, however much they have been slightly considered, surprise even now by the universality of their application. In those Heads for Consideration, he sets out with some fundamental propositions, which, though derided in days when cordial alliances with France are spoken of as the corner-stone of English policy, seem, as the history of centuries bears ample testimony, to recur periodically with a constancy which would almost establish natural laws. France, he maintained, by the mere circumstances of her geographical position, could not but affect every European state. That whatever form the internal government of France might assume, the standing policy of this country would always be to watch her external proceedings, he considered as a cardinal principle of policy. And that, when, as had then occurred, France had penetrated into

\* Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 21.

Germany, was meditating an invasion of the Netherlands, had absolutely acquired Savoy, and armed and overborne the whole Swiss Confederation, no circumstances could be more truly serious, or require graver deliberation from English statesmen. A French fleet domineered in the Mediterranean; France sought to force Italy to submit to any terms she might impose; and no power could consider itself out of the reach of her arms, or free from the application of principles which combined all the evils of unrestrained democracy and unmitigated despotism. After reasoning on these circumstances early in the November, 1792, and amplifying the considerations he had previously laid down, he commented with great force on the radical errors committed by the Duke of Brunswick and the King of Prussia during the campaign, and the impolicy of neglecting the emigrants, who were after all the principals in the war, but seemed to be jealously kept in the background. It was a contest avowedly commenced for great humane and European objects; but it had been carried on for some small German interests. Adversity had come. The winds had blown, the rains had beat, the house built upon sand had fallen, and great had been the fall thereof. It was evident that there was a secret; that secret Burke clearly guesses to be the King of Prussia's defection. He then develops his own plan, laying it down as unquestionable that there could be no steady coalition of the Continental Powers against France unless England were the directing soul; that England alone could act with that sincerity and plain dealing which could not be suspected; that she alone could by her superior navy keep the maritime force of France in check. He then suggested the course to be pursued, if, as to him appeared certain, she could not but

take part in the war. We had to assure Spain and Austria of our determination to embark with them, to encourage the Swiss and Sardinians, to strengthen the alliance with Russia, and keep Prussia, if possible, faithful to the common cause, to acknowledge Louis XVI.'s brother as regent of France, and at once to fit out two powerful fleets for the Channel and the Mediterranean.\*

This is the outline of the little pamphlet finished by Burke at Bath on the fifth of November. The course of policy it traced was at least clear, precise, and determined. Pitt however was not prepared to act upon it; he vacillated, he hesitated, he occupied the most untenable of all positions, that of a Minister sincerely desirous of preserving peace, and yet ready to be prevailed upon by the pressure of circumstances and events to go to war. It is obvious that he had but two really intelligible courses to pursue. With Fox he might resolve at all hazards to remain at peace, or, with Burke, he might boldly put his country at the head of Europe, to wage a war for civilization, for property, for religion, for life. It was foolish to think of going into such a contest with half a heart, or without steadily recognizing its peculiar nature. It could not be, as Burke over and over again declared, a war like others which we had carried on with France. It was a war against a sect whose irreligious and republican views had inspired them with a fanaticism like that which had impelled the Mahometans from the deserts of Arabia to overrun much of the civilized world, or like that which had sent hosts after hosts of crusaders to perish in their efforts to recover the Holy Sepulchre. Once in the history of the world this strange phenomenon was to be

\* See *Heads for Consideration on the Present State of Affairs*, published in Burke's works.



seen. Infidelity was to act with all the impulse of faith; unblushing atheists were to fight as inspired warriors. One belief the shoeless and breechless Parisian had, as he rushed to the French frontier to combat the enemy, and that was a belief in France. The follies, insincerities, and jealousies of the sovereigns who had again partitioned Poland inspired the French Jacobin with a zeal which became at least respectable. Without faith in a single institution of the past or a doctrine that former generations had believed, he at least felt that he had a country to defend.

The day after finishing his Heads for Consideration, Burke and his wife set out to return to Beaconsfield. She was much better than when they arrived at Bath; but the roads being wet, and the days short, their homeward journey was not very agreeable. They stayed a night at Devizes, where Burke began a long letter to his son on Irish affairs; at Reading they slept for another night, and the letter was resumed; but it was not until the eighth of November that they reached Beaconsfield, with the letter still unfinished in Burke's writing-desk. The following day he hurried up to town, whence he at last sent off his epistle. Richard had been travelling in the South of Ireland, visiting the scenes where his father had spent so many of his early years, and where he had begun to love the charms of a country life. The son had also been gracefully acting the part of peacemaker among some of those who had formerly dandled Burke on their knees, and the father thanked him, with much real pleasure, for having “made up the vexatious and ridiculous quarrel amongst my contemporary old women.”

Richard had also visited the lakes of Killarney, but his father's cousin and correspondent, Garret Nagle, was there

no more to receive him, and the reception he met with from Lord Kenmare, the noble owner of the fine property in the neighbourhood, was but indifferent. Richard, in a letter from Killarney, mentioned the circumstance to his father. "I am glad," replied Burke, "that you like the water and the mountains, though the owner was as shabby as they are noble. He is resolved to preserve in perfect consistency his folly and meanness. Poor Moylan, who is his friend, I saw was afraid to ask one question about your reception." There was a reason, though a bad one, for Lord Kenmare not receiving Richard Burke so hospitably as he might have expected. This nobleman, who was an old acquaintance of the father, and an old correspondent about relieving the Catholic disabilities, had, when the business began to assume a practical shape, grown very lukewarm, and professed to look with great sympathy on the difficulties of the Lord Lieutenant and his chief Secretary. Burke had therefore familiarly spoken of those halting supporters of concession as "Kenmared;" and the approach of Richard Burke, the avowed agent of the uncompromising Catholic Association, was not likely to be welcome to one who had withdrawn himself from the cause, and wished to keep on good terms with the Castle.

Burke, as he wrote to his son, was never less inclined to compromise the Catholic claims. Though different opinions may exist as to his wisdom in counselling so eagerly the war with France, there can be no question of the breadth and sagacity of the policy he recommended to combat the Jacobin enemy. This was a time which, as he said to Richard, could only be properly characterized by the motto of the O'Briens, "*Laire laidir en oughter*," which he translated, "The bloody hand on high." This

was then the time when union was imperatively necessary between English political parties, between different religious sects, between England and Ireland. This union he was, particularly during his visit to London immediately after his return to Bath, most anxious to bring about. After the crimes of the tenth of August and the second of September, he thought that even Fox would see the madness and folly of the French Jacobins, and be willing to join the Ministry, with his friends Windham and the Duke of Portland, to resist their frantic schemes. He thought, since war there was to be, the Government would itself acknowledge the necessity of drawing closer the bonds of amity between Catholics and Protestants, and by giving them both in England and Ireland a common interest in the constitution, make them unite heartily against the common enemy of both religions. This was, to his mind, the most important of all steps a far-sighted Government could take. It is melancholy to consider how much evil both to England and Ireland directly followed, up even to our day, from the neglect of this wise and provident counsel. Invasions, insurrections, heartburnings, discontent, disloyalty, and almost the dismemberment of the empire, arose from the manner in which Burke's advice was disregarded.

In other instances the great majority of the English people were at length ready enough to act on his counsels. The alarm which he had at first felt at the French Revolution prevailed almost everywhere; and the acts of the leaders in the French Convention were certainly not calculated to diminish any apprehensions that the massacres of the last August and September had inspired. The English ambassador had not returned to Paris, and the two Governments, if France could then be supposed

to have a Government, were, without as yet any formal declaration of war, in a state of direct hostility. The Convention had passed the most extraordinary resolutions, declaring their support to every people who had still the misfortune to be under monarchical governments. Deputations from the Constitutional Society, and from some Englishmen in Paris, had been received and complimented at the bar of the Assembly; and the people of England were, in the speeches of the President and of the Jacobin orators, openly spoken of as being in a position of antagonism to their Government and their sovereign. In fact George III. was not considered by them a sovereign at all: the people, that is, a very small minority, who sent sympathetic addresses to the French republic, was the real sovereign. The intention, at length boldly declared, of publicly trying and executing the unhappy Louis XVI. added to the horror and disgust which were so strongly excited on this side of the Channel. The retreat of the Duke of Brunswick and the progress of the French arms in the Netherlands and Brabant, and the design against Holland, whose independence was clearly jeopardized, still further increased the indignation of the respectable classes of England, and took possession of nearly every man who had anything to lose. Some writers, sympathizing with the stand made by Fox in opposition to the general voice, have perhaps somewhat too easily concluded that the Government might have preserved peace. But in truth those who endeavour fairly to enter into the feelings that prevailed among the Jacobins in Paris and the orthodox subjects of King George III. must come to the conclusion that the war, if not on one pretence, then another, must inevitably have broken out. The hostile passions on both

sides were becoming too strong to be restrained by any Government. Unless all the usual rules of diplomacy, the principles of international law, and the treaties which had hitherto bound the interests of states and kingdoms were to be totally disregarded, the Republicans in Paris could not but afford to the British Government twenty different causes of war. The opening of the river Scheldt did as well as any other. When the clouds are everywhere heavily charged with electricity, the lightning and the thunder can scarcely fail to follow.

In obedience to the general feeling, Parliament was somewhat irregularly summoned to meet on the thirteenth of December. Burke was at his post, anxious to bring about that union between the Government and Opposition which had for some time been one of his most ardent wishes. The Duke of Portland was ready to enter into such a combination. Fox at once and for ever completely extinguished in Burke's bosom any hope he still clung to, of seeing his former friend united with Pitt, and acting as a Minister in an anti-Jacobin administration. He vehemently attacked the Government. He strongly reprehended any allusion to war. He moved an amendment to the Address. By these decided proceedings he rendered the disunion of Opposition manifest, and reduced his numbers to a small but select band of zealous supporters. He was deserted by his friend Lord Sheffield. Windham made a powerful speech in answer to the Opposition leader. Burke, with great eloquence and amid the most rapturous applause, called on all lovers of their country to unite to preserve the English Constitution, and to prevent Europe from being torn to pieces by the mad ambition of the French Jacobins. If it had been Fox's object to purge his ranks of all but his most de-

cided supporters this was completely accomplished. His little band only counted fifty in the division.\*

Defeat however only seemed to increase his determination to show his total separation from Burke and the moderate Whigs, who were inclined to join the Minister with their nominal chief, the Duke of Portland. When, on the following day, the report of the Address was brought up by the mover, the Lord Mayor of London, Fox proposed another amendment in deprecation of the impending war. In speaking of the success of the French armies he taunted Burke with what he called the classic prophecy, made in the celebrated speech on the Army Estimate in 1791, '*Gallos olim bello floruisse*;' and even accused Burke of treating him in the debate of the preceding evening with much incivility. Sheridan seconded this amendment. Burke immediately afterwards rose. It was the fashion, he said, to quote him as an author; but his assailants invariably selected isolated passages from his writings without regard to what went before, and what followed in the context. He defined what he meant by liberty, contrasted his definition with the metaphysical abstractions of the Rights of Man, which had led to anarchy, confiscation, and slaughter, referred to the unhappy fate of the Duke de la Rochefoucault in La Vendée, and concluded by praising the Roman Catholics of Ireland for disregarding the delusive lights of the French Republicans, and temperately asking as British subjects to partake of the blessings of the British Constitution. Burke's speech was received not merely with applause, but with acclamations. It was felt by the great majority that he alone had correctly judged of the French Revolution from the first; and many of those

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxx. p. 59.

who formerly jeered at him, and reviled him, at last regarded him as a prophet, whose prophecies had been literally fulfilled.

Fox's motion was negatived ; but he seemed only the more determined to persevere in the course he had taken. The next day was Saturday ; and yet on that unusual day he brought forward a motion for sending an English ambassador to Paris. He was suffering under a severe attack of hoarseness ; but this physical indisposition could not restrain the ardour of his mind. He laid it down as a general proposition, admitting of no exception, that every nation ought to treat with the Government of every other, whatever form that Government might assume. We had sent a consul to Algiers ; we had sent a consul to Morocco ; why then could we hesitate to send an ambassador to treat with the democratic Republicans at Paris ? This might be logical ; it was however scarcely seasonable, just when Louis XVI. was about to be tried for his life, and, as a matter of course, condemned to death. Whatever might have been Fox's intention in making such a motion at this particular time, his conduct certainly injured himself and his party. It drove from his standard many influential persons who had hitherto steadily adhered to him, but who in this debate told him to his face that they could act with him no longer. It is easy enough to talk glibly at our ease about the folly of the alarmists of that period ; but those who lived throughout the year 1848 may form some faint conception of the agitation and excitement at the close of 1792. Lord Macaulay has invariably condemned the policy which induced Burke to recommend a war with the French Jacobins, and, under the apprehension of their cosmopolitan schemes, to pass restraining laws in Eng-

land. Yet, although the revolutions of 1848 were comparatively bloodless, although no guillotine was erected, and no massacre committed, and although the Provisional Government did not violate treaties and proclaim principles utterly incompatible with the existence of every monarchical government in the world, the great historian, in alluding to what was happening while the first two volumes of his work were passing through the press, concluded them by declaring that Europe had been in danger of being subverted by barbarians more savage and inhuman than those who had marched under Attila, that the truest friends of the people had with the deepest sorrow seen that interests more precious than any political privileges were in jeopardy, and that "it might be necessary to sacrifice even liberty in order to save civilization." The man who wrote such alarming sentences in 1848 could not consistently blame Burke and those who thought with him, in the much more alarming and infinitely more tragical circumstances of the December of 1792, for thinking that all order, civilization, and even freedom itself, were at stake in the contest about to be waged against the Jacobin republic.

On this Saturday afternoon, when Fox made his motion for sending an ambassador to France, Burke definitely took his seat on the Ministerial side of the House. He had in his excitement occasionally before walked across the House and sat down on the Treasury Bench ; but he took up his position at last to indicate publicly that between him and Fox not only was there no private friendship, but the most decided political hostility. He spoke shortly after Erskine, and let fly at the brilliant advocate a sarcasm which hit one of the most amusing weaknesses of his character. "The honourable and learned gentle-



man,” he said, “always instructs this House as the ancient philosophers did their pupils, by proposing himself as their example.” He afterwards referred to the accusations of interested inconsistency which were so frequently brought against him, for his hostility to the French Revolution ; and observed, “Strange as it may appear to some gentlemen with whom I formerly acted, I affirm in the face of the House and of the country, that I retain, and ever will retain, my independence. I have made no provision for myself nor for my family. We are not in the possession of any office ; neither cajoled by the reversion of place, nor by the promise of pension ; and yet, because I have expressed my abhorrence of the French doctrines, I am pursued and reviled with all the force of rancour and hostility.” While these remarks were being made, and during Burke’s speech of the preceding evening, a Mr. Whitmore, member for Bridgenorth, and one of Fox’s most enthusiastic followers, had been most assiduous in his jeering interruptions. The House was however in no humour to tolerate the impertinence to which Burke had formerly been subjected, and Mr. Whitmore was repeatedly called to order. This was all in vain. Fox’s disciple was quite uproarious. At length a gentleman from the Ministerial side rose, and called upon the Speaker to enforce the standing order against a disorderly Member. Addington, the Speaker, said that, after what had occurred the day before and on that day, he was obliged publicly to mention the offending Member by name. This, which is regarded by all who are conversant with the forms of the House as a great disgrace, and is of very rare occurrence, was accordingly done. Mr. Whitmore was ordered to withdraw. It was moved that he should be reprimanded. Burke interceded for his

sailant, saying that his offence was occasioned by a warmth of temper which he could not restrain, and hoped that no harsh proceedings would be adopted. Through his friend Mr. Adam, Mr. Whitmore apologized, and promised that he would be very careful never to offend again in a similar manner. The apology and promise were accepted; the motion for a reprimand was withdrawn. Mr. Whitmore was called in, and, looking very shame-faced, was allowed to take his seat on the Opposition benches, among Fox's fifty supporters, who, as some amends for the smallness of their numbers, proudly denominated themselves his "phalanx."\*

Burke afterwards entered into a contrast between Franklin and Paine, and between the American war and the French Revolution. He was guilty, he said, of no inconsistency in respecting Franklin as a philosopher and a friend, and in admiring his conduct with regard to his native country. Franklin was a born American. Paine was an Englishman. The American Revolution was stained by no massacres, by the avowal of no monstrous doctrines of hostility to all sovereigns, or by the proclamation of principles incompatible with the existence of any good government or the peace of the world. Burke's speech was highly applauded: it was very eloquent, though, as the reporters remarked, somewhat desultory. In conclusion he read a slip of paper which contained a declaration that if England was obliged to go to war, it was occasioned by those who had tried to make common cause with the French Jacobins; and that such a war was necessary for the security of the liberties of England, the interests of Europe, and the happiness of mankind. The debate was long; and though

\* See Parl. Hist., vol. xxx. p. 113.

Fox's motion had no chance of being carried, he caused great scandal among serious people by making the House sit into the Sunday morning. This circumstance increased the growing prejudices against his conduct. Burke afterwards alluded to it with strong disapproval.\*

In the following week similar discussions were revived, while the French Convention was foolishly passing other fraternizing decrees interfering with the governments and territories of their neighbours. The proceedings against the imprisoned king were hurried on with equal steps. The horror and alarm of the respectable class in England increased. Burke's predictions were every day being more than fulfilled. Associations were formed in London and other places to prosecute the seditious writings in favour of the Jacobins; while the sympathizers, on the other hand, with Fox's encouragement, formed themselves into a Society, called The Friends of the Liberty of the Press, in which Erskine took the lead, and was by the members publicly thanked for his brilliant defence of Paine.

The Government, with Burke's approbation, made every preparation to combat foreign enemies and to put down internal sedition. Votes for increased naval estimates and increased army estimates passed with little opposition. Parliament was kept sitting up to Christmas day, and throughout the Christmas week. An Alien Bill was brought in, directed particularly at foreigners just arrived, or arriving in this country, and who, according to the wild counsels of Marat, were supposed to be armed with daggers to assassinate the King of England and all the Royal family. We may laugh at such apprehensions; but the aspect of that time rendered them sufficiently serious. If excited politicians in the National Conven-

\* Observations on the Conduct of the Minority, par. 10.

tion saw the hand of Pitt in every outrageous crime of the Parisian populace, it is not surprising that the alarmed citizens of London suspected the bearded and moustachioed foreigners who then landed at the Custom-house in most unusual numbers to have democratic daggers hidden beneath the folds of their long cloaks. Nothing could be considered more incredulously absurd and ridiculous to believe than what the French legislators had gravely done.

On his way down to the House of Commons, when the Alien Bill was to be discussed, Burke called at the Foreign Office. The proceedings of the seditious clubs and the designs of the foreign democrats were the common subject of conversation among all friends of the Constitution; and the Under-secretary of State showed Burke a dagger which had been sent to a manufacturer at Birmingham, as a pattern with an order for some thousands of a similar kind. Burke took the dagger with him to the House. After Dundas had stated the objects of the Bill, and Sir Gilbert Elliot had declared that he was, with other gentlemen who had hitherto supported the Opposition leader, compelled to withdraw his support from him, Fox rose, once more avowed his sympathies with the French republicans against the European despots, and, alluding to the disaffection then so manifest in the Whig ranks, said, that Burke might have been satisfied with condemning him to banishment in Sinope, without inflicting upon him the additional punishment of a disagreement with so many friends who had so long and so faithfully followed his banner. Burke spoke immediately after Fox. With regard to Sinope, he declared that he had nothing at all to answer; he had himself been sent, not to Sinope, but to Coventry. He entered into an

elaborate examination of the democratic and atheistic principles of the French Government and their designs on other countries. In this portion of his speech there was nothing wild, exaggerated, or vehement ; everything was grave, argumentative, and reasonable. Coming to the Bill itself, he said that it was necessary in order to keep such murderous atheists from our shores. Already they had begun their schemes of fraternization and bloodshed. A large order for daggers had been given in Birmingham ; how many for exportation and how many for home consumption it was impossible to say. The House looked astonished. Pulling out the dagger which he had hitherto kept concealed, he held it up before the audience, and then threw it vehemently on the floor. Pointing at it he exclaimed, “ This is what you are to gain from your alliance with France. Such are the daggers prepared for you. Whenever such principles are introduced, such practices must follow.” A scornful tittering was heard from one or two of Fox’s phalanx. Burke checked it indignantly. “ Let us,” he said, “ keep French principles from our heads and French daggers from our hearts. Let us keep our Constitution here, and a belief in a future hereafter. I vote for this Bill, because I consider it the means of saving my life and all our lives from the hands of assassins. I vote for it, because it will break the abominable system of the modern Pantheon, and prevent the introduction of French principles and French daggers. When those men smile, I see blood trickling down their faces ; I see their insidious purposes ; I see that the object of all their cajoling is blood ! I warn my countrymen to beware of those execrable philosophers, whose only object is to destroy everything that is good here, and to establish immorality and murder by precept and example : *Hic niger est, hunc tu Romane caveto.*”

The House was in great excitement when Burke sat down. None of the opponents of the Bill ventured to rise; and it was read a second time without any difficulty.\*

Yet this Dagger Scene, as it was called, has been frequently referred to as a studied piece of rhetorical artifice, ending in a catastrophe which showed that there was but a step between the sublime and the ridiculous. The jokes made upon it by Sheridan and others, particularly the jeering question, "The gentleman has shown us the knife; now where is the fork?" have been regularly repeated with great zest by those who disapproved of Burke's policy and the war against the French Revolution. That the incident was not studied is sufficiently clear from the manner in which the dagger first came into Burke's possession.† There is however reason to believe that the scene was much more an impromptu than the brilliant jokes said to have been made upon it at the time. This is not the first of Sheridan's extempore witticisms which may be suspected of being elaborately made before or after the event. His after dinner good sayings were frequently the result of painful morning rehearsals; his brilliant impromptus were indefatigably meditated; his facts were not seldom imaginations. The debates of that evening are reported with unusual fullness; but there is no interpolation to be found recorded like that ascribed to Sheridan, nor any indication that Burke's action with the dagger was received with much merriment. The House was in a very serious and deeply agitated mood; and a joke on such a subject at such a moment would certainly have been resented as a

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxx. p. 190.

† See Twiss's Life of Lord Eldon, vol. i. p. 152.

most unseasonable impertinence. It is also worthy of remark that, although there were several other debates on the Alien Bill before it passed the third reading, Sheridan never spoke on the question at all, and that not a single allusion from any Member can be found showing that Burke's conduct was regarded as absurd or inappropriate. Gilray caricatured the scene. But it is not Burke that the satirical artist makes ridiculous, but Pitt and Dundas, who are represented as horror-stricken at the object presented to their view, and Fox and Sheridan, who are depicted as gloomy conspirators, alarmed because their diabolical plots for the destruction of the King and the Constitution are revealed.

What became of the dagger which Burke that night threw down on the floor of the House of Commons? It has been said that the Under-secretary, from whom it had been obtained, picked it up and carried it home. But a dagger is still shown by the stalwart farmer who sat to Reynolds as the Infant Hercules as the identical weapon which Burke threw down on the floor of the House of Commons. Others have supposed that Burke had several daggers sent him from Birmingham, and that the weapon procured by the Infant Hercules and shown by him to visitors as a precious relic, was only one out of the extensive assortment. I am not disposed to disturb the faith of the Infant Hercules; his belief that his was the very dagger Burke used has been fondly cherished; it has afforded him many moments of proud complacency; his life has been rude, hard, unthankful; and which of us, high or low, refined scholars or rough manual labourers, likes to have his illusions destroyed?

As the Alien Bill passed into law, the mock trial of Louis XVI. and the three votings went forward. The

horror and indignation of the English people increased with the progress of that tragedy ; years before Burke had prophesied that both the King and Queen would be brought to the scaffold ; and it was said that nothing occurred but what he had foretold.

Early in the January of 1793, he received a letter from the Abbé Edgeworth, whom he personally knew. This Abbé was descended from an Irish family, but, being the confessor of the Princess Elizabeth, the sister of Louis XVI., had been chosen by the King to give him the last ministrations in the event of his impending execution. The Abbé bravely remained at his post, determined to obey the commands of his royal master, and, if necessary, attend him to the scaffold, though he was fully conscious that his own life would be in the greatest danger. His letter to Burke was beautiful and pathetic. It was as from one who was himself preparing for death. “ You are undoubtedly surprised, my dear and learned friend,” the Abbé wrote, “ that whilst the clergy of France are flocking to England for shelter and support, I should remain here amidst the ruins of this afflicted, persecuted Church. Indeed I often wished to fly to that land of true liberty and solid peace, and to share with others at your hospitable board, where to be strangers and in distress is a sufficient title. But Almighty God has baffled all my measures, and ties me down to this land of horrors by chains which I have not liberty to shake off. The case is, the Malheureux Maître charges me not to quit the country, for that I am the person he intends to employ to prepare him for death, in case the iniquity of the nation should commit that last act of cruelty and parricide. In these circumstances I must endeavour to prepare myself, too, for death ; for I am convinced that popular rage will



not allow me to survive one hour after that tragic act.—Receive the unfeigned assurance, perhaps for the last time, of my respect and affection for you, which I hope even death shall not destroy.”\*

On the twenty-first of the month in which this letter was written, the good Abbé did attend Louis XVI. to the scaffold. With him he mounted the ladder to the fatal guillotine, and ran the greatest risk of his own life; for had the executioner refused to do this office, Santerre and his guards were ready themselves to strike, and the execution would have ended in a general massacre. When the poor King objected to be bound, the Abbé overcame his reluctance by reminding him that the Saviour had himself submitted to the same humiliation; and when the axe fell on the neck of the struggling sovereign, it was the Abbé who said, “Son of St. Louis, ascend to heaven!” The King was gratefully sensible of the Abbé’s heroic devotion. One of the last requests he made to the Lieutenant who conducted him from his prison to the guillotine was, “Take care of M. Edgeworth.”

The news of Louis XVI.’s execution filled England with sorrow and alarm. The most resolute supporters of the Revolution had nothing to say in favour of the deed of blood. Burke’s ascendancy over the minds of the large majority of his countrymen became greater than ever. Was he then, people said to each other, always right? Were his powers of foresight not almost supernatural? He was indeed a wonderful man. The cry for war against the atheists and the regicides rang throughout the land. England was on fire to commence the crusade, to which Burke, like another Peter the Hermit, had so long directed his eloquent exhortations. The French ambassa-

\* Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 111.

dor was ordered to leave the country in eight days. An English squadron appeared on the coast of Holland. Lord Auckland, our Minister at the Hague, went beyond the limits of diplomacy in his denunciations of the murderous confederacy in Paris. The French Government however suddenly took the initiative, and formally declared war against both Holland and England.

The object then of Burke's wishes for two years was at last attained. He had believed that the only safety to England and her institutions consisted in a war to the knife against the French Jacobinism; and England was at last at war. The King's message on this subject was communicated to the House of Commons on the eleventh of February, and on the following day Pitt proposed an Address, pledging the House to support the Crown in every exertion to prosecute so just and necessary a contest. Fox moved an amendment, meaning indeed very much the same thing, though not couched in quite such strong terms. He bitterly complained that he had been very much misrepresented, that he was no partisan of Jacobinism, and was ready to support the war, if war there must be, quite as cordially as any of the adherents of the Government.

Burke spoke after Fox, and alluded to certain circumstances which must strike every reader of those Parliamentary debates. Fox took every pains to make himself understood, and never allowed his friends to lose one of his arguments through any fear of becoming tiresome. If he commenced a speech in a thin House, and found that it was only becoming full after he had spoken for more than an hour, he would at once begin again and repeat every argument he had used when the benches were almost empty, without any regard to the impatience of those

who had been present when he first stood up to speak. His admirers too took every care that what he had been so careful to inculcate on the minds of the Members should also be carefully preserved for the benefit of the public out of doors. For him the editor of the Morning Chronicle spared no pains, and of all the orators of that day Fox's speeches will be found to be the best reported. Burke's speeches, on the other hand, are very badly given ; it seemed to be an understood thing that what he said was to be slurred over ; and in fact on very important occasions he was frequently represented as saying almost the very reverse of what actually came from his lips. At the family breakfast-table it was the task of his brother Richard to read the debate of the preceding evening as it was rendered in the morning newspaper ; and Burke used to suffer tortures on hearing how his eloquence and arguments, delivered to the House in such finish and beauty, were distorted and misrepresented in the public journals. Richard, whose love of fun at all times was proverbial, would sometimes even go beyond the reported speech, and in the same tone of voice read some absurd interpolations of his own, which would produce from Burke an ejaculation, “This is all wrong, Dick ; they quite mistake me ;” and then, on something still more absurd being added by the waggish reader, he would at last be stopped in his mischief by Burke's solemn protestation, “I declare to God, Dick, I said nothing of the kind.”

None of Burke's speeches had been more slovenly and incorrectly reported than those made at the close of the last year on Fox's amendment to the Address, his motion for sending an ambassador to Paris, and the Alien Bill. Fox's harangues on the same topics had however been

most fully and correctly given in the newspapers. In reply therefore to Fox's complaints of being misunderstood on his amendment to the royal message on the Declaration of War, it was indeed strange, Burke tauntingly said, "how a gentleman of talents so clear, powerful, and perspicuous could be misunderstood; particularly a person who took so much pains by repetition, and going over the same grounds again and again, to bring his superior powers to the low, vulgar level, and whose friends out of doors neglected no human art to display his talents to the utmost advantage, and to detail his speeches to the public in such a manner that he, though a close observer of the right honourable gentleman, had never been able to recollect a single idea of his that had escaped the attention of his friends, while the speeches of other gentlemen, such as his friend Mr. Windham, whose abilities were equal to his virtues, were so mangled and confused in the reports that were made of them, as to be utterly unintelligible to the public." These facts ought to be carefully remembered by those who examine impartially the political records of those times. It is not surprising that Fox sometimes appears to have the best of an argument, since his are the only arguments correctly reported. In answer to what he said about the object and limits of the war being strictly defined at the outset, Burke began to read a quotation from one of Fox's anti-Gallican speeches against the commercial treaty in 1787. The Speaker said that it was disorderly to refer to a former debate. Burke replied that he would read something from a pamphlet which he held in his hand. "Read! read!" shouted the majority of the House. The Speaker however again interposed; Burke, admitting that order was more important than argument, resumed his own remarks,

showing how much more dangerous France was under the republic than under the ancient monarchy, and exhorting Members at such a serious moment to examine themselves as if in the Divine Presence, and see whether their motive in recommending war was such as their consciences approved. “I declare,” he said, “without hesitation, and as if before that Presence, Ministers have not precipitated the nation into a war, but have been themselves brought into it by an overruling necessity. I possess as deep a sense of the severe afflictions of war as any man can possibly do. Trembling I touch it, but with honest zeal. I always held it as one of the last of evils, and wish only to adopt it now from the conviction that at no distant period we shall be obliged to encounter it, at much greater disadvantage.”\* Sheridan replied to Burke with much acrimony, reminding him again of the classical quotation in the speech on the army estimates about the Gauls having formerly flourished in war being the language of the rising generation, and obviously intent on treating Burke with as little respect as Parliamentary decorum would permit, and anxious to make the quarrel between him and Fox more bitter than it then actually was. Burke, knowing what he had really done in the course of his life for human freedom, and what his powers, sacrifices, and motives were, compared with those of his clever assailant, who really knew nothing of statesmanship or political philosophy, whose public life had not been half so long, and whose private life was the scandal of his friends, his great master in morals being George, Prince of Wales, might feel some scorn at being lectured, accused of inconsistency, and held up to odium by such a man as

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iv. p. 106.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Sheridan was however, happily for himself, not conscious of the contrast which the spectacle afforded. It was his particular delight in all those discussions to goad, and as much as possible enrage Burke.\*

Though Fox's amendment was regarded merely as an opposition in form, and though his followers were day by day deserting him, in the week immediately following he returned to the charge, and moved five distinct resolutions against the war with France. Burke took the most active and decided part against those resolutions. Fox had strongly argued that no confidence could be placed in allies who had during the last year partitioned Poland, and that the call upon us to resist that most unjust spoliation had been quite as imperative as that which led us into a war to prevent France from opening the Scheldt. Burke was far from approving of the river Scheldt occupying so prominent a position in the English declaration of war; and he had in conversation expressed his disapprobation by a familiar simile, much more homely indeed than delicate. Still less did he approve of either the first or the second partition of Poland. In 1773 he had been the first of English statesmen to foretell the disastrous consequences to Europe from such a breach of international law, and disregard of all public faith. In 1791 he had been the first of English statesmen to exult over the grant of a free constitution to the Poles and the establishment of a hereditary dynasty under King Stanislaus Augustus. The noble passage on those events in the Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs, had been everywhere admired. Since then the constitutional monarchy had been stricken down, through the

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxx. p. 387.

rapacious jealousy of the imperious Catherine of Russia; Poland had been overrun by foreign enemies, and her territories had been shamelessly dismembered by sovereigns who were horrified at the misdeeds of the French revolutionists. Young Mackintosh, in the columns of the *Morning Chronicle*, had advocated a joint interference of England and France to prevent the unscrupulous despots from securing their violent acquisitions. Subscription-lists had been started; and as Burke was known to have been in favour of a coalition against France, and his eloquent passages about Poland in the *Appeal* familiar to everybody, he had been jeeringly asked for his Polish subscription. But Stanislaus Augustus himself being the judge, of all English statesmen Burke was really the best friend of Poland. Even in his recent *Thoughts on French Affairs* he had protested against the partition; and he was to repeat that protest in the last political work he ever penned. But he totally disagreed with Fox on the policy of going to war for that cause in conjunction with the Jacobins against the European monarchs; because he thought that England could not operate effectively in Poland with her naval forces, must in such war occupy a subordinate position to the French Government, and might be made the instrument of designs which she could never sanction against potentates whom she had a right to consider her allies. Fox himself never called out for a war in favour of Poland, until it became evident that England would be involved in a war with the French republic. His views on the question were in truth, as Burke clearly showed, not very statesmanlike. They were certainly most distasteful to the House of Commons; and his resolutions against the French war met

the same fate as his amendment to the Address. His followers now numbered only forty-four.\*

A fortnight afterwards, on the fourth of March, Sheridan ironically moved for a Committee to inquire into the existence of seditious practices. It was in this debate, more than two months after the event, that he began to sneer at Burke's use of the dagger in the debate on the Alien Bill. It was evident, he said, that Burke had lost his senses through fright at the French Jacobins. His fine taste was entirely gone. He had become the slave of the most ridiculous pantomimic tricks and contemptible juggling, and carried about with him daggers and knives to assist him in efforts of description. In answer to Sheridan, Burke read a long letter from a Birmingham manufacturer as an authority for his statement about the daggers, and said that the only error he committed was to suppose that three thousand had been ordered and seventy-two made, when in fact ten thousand had been ordered and four thousand made.†

In the course of this speech occurred the most unpleasant of all his disputes with Fox. He said that the very day after the murder of the Princesse de Lamballe, Philippe Egalité had obtained possession of her jointure. Fox contemptuously shook his head. "Is this untrue?" asked Burke. "Certainly," replied Fox; "but not more untrue than much of what you have stated besides." "I have stated," replied Burke, "nothing but on accurate inquiry, and with the proofs in my possession; and any man who says that my assertions are untrue without confuting them, and showing that they are so, is a calumniator." Fox called out "Order!

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxx. p. 453.

† Collected Speeches, vol. iv. p. 126.



order!” and said, “If the right honourable gentleman means to affront me personally, he ought to do that elsewhere. As to his assertions, six of them have been confuted in a single day.” The Speaker interfered, and put an end to this most unseemly altercation. But the quarrel between the two old friends had reached a pretty pitch, when Fox publicly spoke of personal insults, challenges, and fighting duels.\*

Burke again, before he sat down, threw out questions to Fox, and was again called to order. He went on to deny Fox’s declaration that he had deserted his party. Not one of those who had originally been of Lord Rockingham’s immediate council had disapproved of the course he had taken with respect to the French Revolution; and “those,” said Burke, “who incidentally joined that party by the way, have no claim upon me.” He concluded with drawing a distinction between a party and a faction, and by telling Fox that though he had learnt from Dr. Price that kings might be cashiered, he seemed quite to forget that leaders of parties could do wrong.†

On every question relating to the war throughout the session the two statesmen stood towards each other in the same bitterly antagonistic position. The Ministers brought in a Traitorous Correspondence Bill. It was opposed in all its stages by Fox; it was supported in all its stages by Burke. Other measures followed, some against the foreign enemy, and some against the domestic enemy; all with Burke’s warm approval, all with Fox’s strongest disapprobation.

At the same time perhaps their greatest annoyance was to be compelled to meet together in the Managers’ box in

\* See Parl. Hist., vol. xxx. p. 553.

† Collected Speeches, vol. iv. p. 128.

Westminster Hall, and consult and co-operate on the trial of Hastings. In February the proceedings were resumed, it was hoped for the last time. Hastings's counsel continued his defence. But the wheels of the venerable but antiquated and cumbersome state-carriage for bringing great offenders to justice lumbered on heavily, and at every moment threatened to stick fast altogether. The forms of the two Houses and the business of the two Houses were continually clashing, and the august ceremonial of an impeachment of the Commons of England in Parliament assembled, before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Westminster Hall, was found to be attended with such serious difficulties as almost to become impossibilities. This great constitutional remedy, handed down from our ancestors in a long chain of precedents, was, through the delays that were constantly occurring, falling into utter discredit; and it seemed that unless the forms of proceeding were modified to suit the requirements of modern times it would become obsolete, and be practically abolished.

The Managers could not attend Westminster Hall, until the Speaker had taken the chair, and the House of Commons was itself sitting. There was the greatest difficulty in getting a House. On the twenty-eighth of February the Lords met earlier than usual, and went into Westminster Hall at half past twelve. But forty Members not yet being present in the Commons, the Speaker could not take the chair. Burke and some of his brother Managers, disregarding all forms, rushed off into Westminster Hall, and went on with the trial. In the evening he brought his conduct before the House, and submitted that under the circumstances he and his colleagues had acted for the best. A resolution was

passed unanimously, expressive of the high approbation of the course the Right Hon. Edmund Burke and the other Managers had taken ; but the circumstance unfortunately showed clearly one of the impediments to the speedy conclusion of the trial.\*

A Committee had been appointed to inquire how the business could be expedited. On the same evening the Report was brought up. The Committee admitted that there had been some remissness in the attendance of Members at the time appointed for the Speaker taking the chair ; and it was proposed to remedy this inconvenience by following the precedent set in the impeachment of the Earl of Strafford, and allowing the Commons to meet as a Committee in Westminster Hall on the days of the trial, without the previous formality of assembling in their own House and waiting until the Speaker could take his seat with the full complement of Members. This was agreed to ; but it scarcely met the most serious cause of delay.

Whoever impartially examines throughout the proceedings of the two Houses in this impeachment will come to the conclusion that neither the Managers for the Commons nor the counsel for the defence of Hastings were justly chargeable with any great waste of time. The length of the proceedings arose partly from the very nature of the trial, and partly from the conduct of the Lords themselves. Though the business had extended over six years, yet, if its duration were judged, not by the number of weeks and months which had been nominally consumed, but by the number of hours during which the Peers had sat in Westminster Hall, the quantity of time occupied was really not so very extraordinary.

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxx. p. 520.

Had they been able to sit from day to day for only five hours a day, the impeachment would have been brought to an end in four months ; and a period of four months does not seem too much time for a tribunal of justice to give to the impeachment of a great state criminal, whose numerous offences had been committed in distant lands and during a long official career. The six years of the opponents of the impeachment really up to this time only meant a hundred days : for this was the whole number on which their Lordships had sat. There had been frequent prorogations. There had been one dissolution of Parliament. There had been long discussions in the two Houses on the legality of the continuance of an impeachment after such a dissolution. There had been the Regency debates. There had been the frequent adjournments of the Court when the Lords retired to their own House, and the judges delivered in private their opinion on each legal question as it arose. And there were the adjournments when the judges went on circuit : and this was the most serious impediment of all to getting through the business of the trial with proper despatch. The impeachment was generally resumed in February, but no sooner had the Managers and counsel warmed into their work, when the judges had to go on circuit, and the trial was suspended in the middle of the session, at the most favourable time for carrying it on. Before it could be again fairly in progress June approached, and the session at that time was drawing to a close. The Lords showed their aversion to the prosecution by steadily refusing to make an arrangement for removing this or any other cause of delay which resulted from a pertinacious adherence to their own rules. Justice might take its course, if it could find one. The English nobles were

not prepared to sacrifice their pleasures for the sake of India or even of Warren Hastings. Then the evidence was principally documentary. Very long and very tedious papers were to be read throughout; and many of them to be translated before they could be put in evidence. Witnesses were to be examined and cross-examined; objections and counter-objections to be raised, argued, and formally decided; as one question was settled another sprang up, and the Managers of the Commons appeared always engaged in wearisome and unprofitable altercations with the defenders of Hastings.

These altercations were more than usually numerous in this session. Burke and Law were continually at war. It might naturally have been expected that the agitation and excitement into which Burke was continually thrown by the harrowing scenes of the French Revolution, and the labours which he imposed upon himself on that subject would have rendered his exertions less zealous in the impeachment. The fact was just the contrary. He seemed to lead three or four industrious lives. His energetic labours on the impeachment kept pace with his energetic labours against the French Jacobins. Only when he had a day of more than ordinary fatigue in Westminster Hall, he was sometimes not to be seen afterwards in the House of Commons, preferring the relaxation of his pleasant home—a home which was soon to become so cheerless.

On one of these occasions a Bill renewing the East India Company's charter was before the House. Fox, affirming that it created new offices for increasing the influence of the Crown, alluded pointedly to Burke's absence from the discussion. Lord Inchiquin intrepidly stood up in defence of his revered friend. He alluded to

a circumstance which others well remembered, though by Fox in all those angry controversies it appeared to be forgotten. At a great popular meeting in Westminster Hall, when party spirit ran high, some scoundrel threw a stink bag at Fox, and the Whig leader was in imminent danger of suffocation. Burke, with all that impetuosity which was so characteristic of him when his humane feelings were roused, rushed into the maddened crowd, and at the imminent peril of his own life endeavoured to capture the miscreant who had thrown the bag. Surely, said Lord Inchiquin, after such a proof of attachment, it was not worthy of the right honourable gentleman to be so ready to attack an old friend when he was not present to defend himself. Fox was not at all mollified. "I complain," said he, "not only of the absence of Mr. Burke, but of other gentlemen who joined him in the vote upon the influence of the Crown in 1780.\*"

This was not the only incident of that time sadly significant of the instability of human friendship. Burke was attacked from another, and still more unexpected quarter. After he had on the twenty-fifth of May been examining closely a witness in the trial of Hastings, Dr. Markham, the Archbishop of York, suddenly interposed and said, with much vehemence, "Upon my word, my Lords, this proceeding is intolerable; the gentleman at your bar is treated like a pickpocket; and if Marat or Robespierre were in the box, he could not conduct himself in a more improper manner than I have often witnessed in the course of this trial." Every one present was thunderstruck. So direct an insult to Burke and the Managers of the impeachment had never before been given even by the rude Thurlow or the dogmatic Law;

\* *Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxx. p. 940.

and yet these words were spoken by a venerable archbishop, of great age, of most respectable character, a peer of the realm, who, as one of Hastings's judges, was bound to act with the strictest impartiality between him and his accusers. Much less provocation than he then received had frequently enraged Burke; but on this occasion friends and enemies admitted that he acted with the greatest dignity. He was not there in his own private capacity, but as the organ of the Commons of England; and he very properly said that he could not notice, he could not hear, anything from such a quarter reflecting upon him in his public character. Like the Speaker to whom Charles I. addressed himself when he invaded the House at the head of his Guards, Burke said, he had neither eyes to see nor ears to hear anything unworthy of the official representative of the Commons of England.\*

Two days afterwards a report of the scene appeared in *The World*, with some comments by the editor in the spirit that characterized the Archbishop's observations. That journal had previously rendered itself obnoxious to the Managers of the impeachment by the violent manner in which it supported Hastings; and on the twelfth of June Mr. Whitehead moved that the report and the comments contained matter of a scandalous and libellous nature. It was however generally felt that the real offender was the Archbishop. Francis, with his usual keenness and acerbity, let fall some observations so just, and so characteristic of Burke in the position he then stood, that they well deserve to be remembered. Junius could not have spoken with more epigrammatic point. Every sentence has the ring of the Great Unknown. “Ever since,” said Francis, “I have been concerned in the transaction

\* Trial of Warren Hastings, published by Debrett, p. 64.

of public affairs, or indeed of any other, it has been my endeavour and practice, taught me perhaps by instruction and certainly confirmed by habit, to turn everything I hear or read or see or observe in the transactions of life, to the improvement of my judgment or to the direction of my conduct; but I do solemnly declare that since I have had any knowledge of history, or any acquaintance with human affairs, I never yet received such a prudential lesson as that which is conveyed to me through the medium of my right hon. friend Mr. Burke, by the fact which is now brought before you. It is not my intention to enter into the praise or blame of my right hon. friend, much less to insist upon the eminence of his abilities, the extent of his knowledge, or the persevering application of his faculties to every subject that engages his attention. The endowments of his mind are too well known to require or admit of illustration by anything I could say of him. But there is one part of his character that I must take notice of, because it immediately concerns my present purpose. It is the well-known character of my right hon. friend that in whatever he undertakes he does nothing by halves, but everything with force and vehemence, and even in matters of less importance, as the Italians call it, *con amore*. He may be right or he may be wrong; but he is always in earnest. *Quodcunque vult valde vult*. There is nothing like double dealing, or hypocrisy, or prevarication in his character. Whenever he takes a part, he goes to the full length of his opinion. You know the worst or the best of him. On one particular subject, we all remember with what zeal and ardour he declared himself. Never, never since ranks and gradations have existed in society, has there appeared in the world an advocate so able, a cham-



pion so determined in the cause of the Upper Orders in our Constitution as my right hon. friend. He is a powerful advocate wherever he takes part. If ever there was a useful and ardent defender of nobility, of prelacy, of hierarchy, it is he. Now mark the return he receives. A right reverend prelate, a pious archbishop, a judge in the seat of judgment, a Spiritual Lord of Parliament, in the face of Europe and the world compares my right hon. friend to two of the most abandoned ruffians that ever disgraced the cause of democracy—to Marat and Robespierre; and declares that my right hon. friend is not a bit better than either of them. Sir, he was a wise man who said, ‘Put not your trust in princes.’ But after this astonishing example, I think that man must be infatuated, must be a fool indeed, who shall hereafter put his trust in bishops.”\*

The facts were really stronger than even Francis represented them, or than, perhaps, he may have known them to be. The Archbishop was not only all that Francis said he was: but he had been one of Burke’s oldest and most intimate friends. Dr. Markham had known him before he had entered Parliament; he had been his adviser and counsellor in the days of hard struggle; he had borne testimony to the greatness of his abilities and the purity of his aspirations; and all that he had anticipated in 1759 had been more than fulfilled. Burke had indeed done the State some service. Both the Reverend Doctor and the struggling man of letters had prospered on their journey through life. Advancing by different roads, the one had attained an Archbishopric, and the other risen to the highest eminence as an orator, philosopher, and statesman. But they had

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxx. p. 985.

left their old friendship like a cast-off garment by the way. Whatever Burke did, it had the same result; he could not find favour in the eyes of the courtly prelate. To the old imputations about the letters of Junius, Burke had added the still deeper sin of prosecuting Warren Hastings, who, while Governor-General in India, had munificently patronized the Archbishop's son, giving him, when only twenty-one years of age, a post as his agent at Benares, worth sixty thousand pounds a year, of course thinking it politic to conciliate one who was supposed to be so high in favour at court as Dr. Markham; and though Burke also was now in favour at court, and had thrown himself so heartily into the struggle against Jacobinism, yet the Archbishop had not relented to his former friend. The truth is, that Dr. Markham's mind was not such as to sympathize with a man like Burke. While Burke was humble it had been well. But the Archbishop, like most of his class who rise high in the Church, though learned, decorous, and respectable, was neither intellectually nor morally fitted to appreciate one who became the resolute advocate of great causes, the unflinching chaster of great criminals, the determined champion or the determined foe of great revolutions. Such, however, as he was, Christ Church is still proud of Dr. Markham, and his portrait, of course in full costume, adorns the hall. He might have been better. He might have been worse. Posterity would certainly have thought none the worse of him, either as a man or as an archbishop, if the friendship which he really showed to Burke in the earlier portion of his career had continued to its close, and if the highly honourable letter in favour of Burke to the Duchess of Queensberry in 1759 had not appeared in such a striking contrast with the insulting letter in

1771, and the most absurd and intemperate comparison of Burke to Marat and Robespierre in 1793.

No person in the House of Commons, not even the most eager of Hastings's partisans, had anything to say in defence of the Archbishop's conduct. It was universally condemned, while the forbearing and dignified manner in which Burke had met the insult was universally praised, and by none more than Dundas. To prosecute the publisher who gave a report of this scene to the world, and allow the Archbishop, who was the real cause of it, to escape all punishment, was acknowledged to be unjust. Burke, though he had not intended to speak, said a few words, expressing his delight that the manner in which he had acted had been so highly approved by the House, and even excusing Dr. Markham, on account of his age and of the infirmities of temper to which all men, even archbishops, were at such a time of life sometimes subject. Fox said that all this might be very true: but Burke had himself been censured by the House for using certain expressions respecting the execution of Nundcomar not half so offensive as those which the right reverend prelate had employed in comparing him to Marat and Robespierre; it was a direct insult both to him and, through his person, to the House of Commons; that House was busily engaged in prosecuting humbler people who were accused of libelling the constitution: what justice was there then if an archbishop escaped with impunity? Moderate counsels, however, prevailed. The adjournment of the House was moved and carried by a great majority.\*

A few days after this exhibition of archiepiscopal in-

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxx. p. 988-93.

temperance in Westminster Hall, Hastings's counsel suddenly closed his defence. As the Managers for the Commons had expected that other evidence would be brought forward, and as many of the papers on which they had to comment had not been printed, they were not ready to commence their replies on the different charges. Burke, indeed, had everything at his fingers' ends ; but even he was not inclined to go on with the business until his brother Managers had time for consultation and preparation. The Lords, however, with their usual covert hostility to the prosecution, appointed an early day for the Managers to proceed with the trial. Burke moved for a Committee to consider the subject. The Report stated that it was impossible for the Managers to begin their reply at the time fixed by the Lords ; that the delay of a fortnight was absolutely necessary for them before they could be ready to do anything ; and that four or five weeks must necessarily elapse before they could be properly prepared to enter into the whole of such an extensive subject. But the friends of Hastings mustered strongly, and opposed all delay. It was with difficulty that a motion was carried, requesting the Lords to postpone any further proceedings with the trial for a few days beyond the time specified. A motion that Burke made for the Managers to prepare a statement of the proceedings on the trial, and an account of the circumstances that had occurred in the course of it, was rejected. As the two Houses were now sitting in June, it was quite obvious that nothing more could be done with respect to the impeachment before the prorogation ; yet when Charles Grey proposed that a message should be sent to the Lords, requesting them to postpone the business until the following session, his mo-

tion, though supported by Mr. Secretary Dundas, was also negatived. The House could not more emphatically show its growing aversion to the impeachment. On the following day the Managers threatened to resign. Burke called upon the House to tell them what they were to do. Dundas himself moved that a message requesting further time should be sent to the Lords. This motion, being supported by all the weight of the Government, was at last carried. The Lords reluctantly gave way, and ordered the trial to be again proceeded with on the second Tuesday of the next session.

Hastings, at their bar, in an elaborate speech, complained greatly of delay. Of course he considered Burke the principal cause of his protracted anxiety. But nothing was more unjust. Burke was as impatient of the delay as Hastings himself, and had long been looking anxiously for the termination of his duties as a Manager of the impeachment to retire from Parliament altogether. It was not his fault that the Lords would not go on with the trial while the judges were absent on circuit, though, as Dundas himself publicly declared, there were plenty of other law Lords quite competent to advise in any legal difficulties. It was not his fault that Hastings's counsel thought fit, in their discretion, unexpectedly to terminate their client's defence when it was supposed that they had much more evidence to produce. It was not his fault that the session ended in June, just a few days after the time the Lords had first capriciously appointed for the Managers to begin their reply. At last, however, there was a prospect of bringing this long business to an end. If no unforeseen circumstances intervened, it was not unreasonable to hope that the next session would see a limit put to Burke's

labours on this great impeachment, and himself released from that bleak and barren Sinope from which he had long ago been sentenced to banishment, and of which he had himself been long willing enough to shake the dust from off his feet.

All the Managers had heartily co-operated on the different questions brought forward relating to the impeachment. The House had the then novel spectacle afforded it of seeing Fox, Sheridan, and Grey once more agreeing, once more speaking, and once more voting together with Windham and Burke. But on one of the last days of the session, they were again beheld in bitter antagonism. It was, as usual, on that discordant topic, the French Revolution. Obeying some suggestions which had been made to him by Mr. Gurney, a banker in Norwich, and some other partisans in that town, Fox closed his efforts for the session by a final motion to put an end to the war which had scarcely begun. Of course such a proposal had no chance of being carried. The division showed the insignificance of Fox's party, and the motion only increased his unpopularity. But it deeply annoyed Burke. He again admitted that the conduct of the Powers who had partitioned Poland was very wrong; but to rail at them, without doing more, was, he said, surely a womanish proceeding. We were now at war. We were at war in alliance with those powers against the common enemy. They were at least Governments with whom we could enter into some relations; but when a great statesman proposed that we should treat with the French Government, he ought surely to show where that Government was? Where was the French Government? Burke then took each of the members of the French administration by name, and

showed that they were in prison, or hiding themselves from their enemies, the Jacobins.\*

This was no exaggeration. Fox's motion was made on the seventeenth of June, exactly a fortnight after the fall of the Girondins. Some were in prison ; some were flying for their lives ; the rest were under arrest in their own houses ; for all of them the guillotine was being sharpened. This was another phase of the French Revolution ; each succeeding phase was stained with a deeper red. The execution of the king had had results which many of those who voted for it had not foreseen. The parties that with common accord had struck at their sovereign's defenceless body, found themselves standing over the lifeless corpse with daggers drawn at each other. That deed of blood had produced union abroad and disunion at home. Six months seemed a long time in such a Revolution. On the second of this June, the Girondins found themselves, not so undeservedly in Burke's opinion, the next victims ; and the mysterious law, the justice of which we can acknowledge, was to be thoroughly fulfilled : the Revolution, like the savage and unnatural mother that she was, was one after the other to eat up her own children.

The session closed with a burst of obloquy stronger than ever against Fox for speaking of peace at such a time with men whom the great body of the English people regarded as incarnate fiends. He had previously published a Letter in defence of his conduct to his constituents, the electors of Westminster. His friends had praised this Letter as a splendid effort of literary genius ; it was about Fox's first appearance in the character of an author ; and it was a vehement declamation in the style

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iv. p. 147.

of his speeches in the House of Commons. It proved, like his historical fragment on the reign of James II., that Fox, though a great orator, was a poor writer; and the comparison some of his unhesitating admirers presumed to make between his efforts with the pen and those of Burke, was simply ridiculous.

Still Fox's friends stood by him manfully. The Whig Club, taking the defence into consideration, came, in spite of Windham and other seceders, to the resolution, that "their confidence in Mr. Fox is confirmed, strengthened, and increased by the calumnies against him;" and to this resolution the Duke of Portland and Lord Fitzwilliam gave their adherence. Now the Duke of Portland being the acknowledged leader of the Rockingham section of the Whigs, and Lord Fitzwilliam, the Marquis's nephew and heir, it looked like a formal declaration in Fox's favour and against Burke in the quarrel that had become irreconcilable. Besides, what were the calumnies to which the resolution alluded? Might they not mean the accusations Burke had himself made against Fox, both in Parliament and through the press, for his ardent championship of the French Revolution? Was not this very much like declaring that Burke was himself the calumniator, and Fox a very much injured man?

So, at least, Burke himself considered. He had, after the resolution of the Whig Club, written down some of his objections to Fox's conduct on the Address, the Alien Bill, the Traitorous Correspondence Bill, and his different motions against the war. On the Parliamentary recess, he took up the subject more systematically, and stated formally and elaborately, in a paper intended for the private consideration of the Duke of Portland and



Lord Fitzwilliam, his reasons why Fox could not longer be considered the leader of the old Whigs, from the motions he had made in favour of the Jacobins, and opposed to the war and the policy of which his two noble friends were understood to approve. After adding considerably to this treatise against Fox, Burke carefully revised it, shut it up in his desk, and, accompanied by his brother and son, went down to Oxford to attend the Duke of Portland's great public installation as Lord Chancellor.

Burke was received most enthusiastically by the undergraduates. The enthusiastic acclamations were for him, and not for the noble Chancellor. He was especially the object of the demonstration, and was greeted with round after round of applause. Of course he could now have the LL.D. conferred upon him ; but the tardy compliment, which, had it been offered earlier, he might have thankfully accepted, was at last politely declined. Not to be balked in doing honour to the name of Burke, his son Richard received the academical title which Burke himself did not think fit to accept.

After returning home to Beaconsfield in September, he carefully read over again the manuscript he had locked up in his desk. On being thus deliberately examined he still felt what he had written during the heat and irritation of the session, confirmed by his judgment when his mind had had time to cool. Accordingly, after having had another copy made, he sent it off to the Duke of Portland, with a letter desiring him to put the manuscript away for the present, and only read it when the inevitable hour of compulsory reflection should come. "Then remember," said Burke, "that your Grace had a true friend, who had, comparatively with men of your descrip-

tion, a very small interest in opposing the modern system of morality and policy ; but who, under every discouragement, was faithful to public duty and to private friendship. I shall then probably be dead; I am sure I do not wish to live to see such things. But whilst I do live, I shall pursue the same course ; although my merits should be taken for unpardonable faults, and as such avenged not only on myself, but on my posterity."

It may be doubted whether Burke really believed that the Duke would implicitly obey his directions, and put the manuscript aside for future perusal. His Grace, at all events, did nothing of the kind. He found the bait too tempting ; and at once set to work, and carefully read the work throughout. He agreed with Burke in all that he had written on the general evils of Jacobinism, and the importance of the war which he thought most justifiably waged for everything worthy of Christians and freemen. He frankly, however, told Burke in reply, on the tenth of October, that he could not keep pace with him in all his observations. He had not yet made up his mind to a union with Pitt. He could not forget all the old antagonism. He could not forget all the old friendship. He could not subscribe to all that was said against Fox. "In this," observed the Duke, "I may be mistaken, as I may have been in other instances ; but I must acknowledge, that where I have been in long habits of intimacy and friendship, where I have observed many and striking instances of very superior talents and judgment, the most incomparable integrity, the most perfect disinterestedness, I am much disinclined to impute to bad motives a conduct, however different and opposite it may be to that which I feel myself obliged to hold. This may be a great weakness,





it is a weakness I am not ashamed of confessing, and so to you than to any friend I have.”\*

The work thus transmitted to, and thus criticized by Duke of Portland, was of course *The Observations on the Conduct of the Minority*, at first intended, as we have seen, for private circulation, but afterwards fraudulently published through the villany of the copyist, Swift, under the taking and somewhat alarming title of *Fifty Heads of Impeachment against Charles James Fox*. Coming to this fraud, and other circumstances attending Swift's first copy, made from Burke's blotted, scrawling, almost illegible rough draught, and with the extensive corrections and alterations made by the pen of the statesman himself, has much curious interest. Having been permitted carefully to inspect this manuscript, through the courtesy of the gentleman from whom I obtained copies of Burke's letters to Swift, from Margate in the summer of 1791,† I could fill pages with a comparison between Burke's original composition and his subsequent corrections and additions. Perhaps, however, the purpose will be better answered by the facsimile of a portion of a single page, which is here presented. It shows that Burke was scarcely ever satisfied with his own work, and that he was never tired of adding to and correcting what he had written. The two handwritings are in singular contrast: Swift's small, clear, and precise penmanship, with Burke's bold, scrawling, and hurried alterations, so characteristically energetic, impetuous, and industrious.

*The Observations on the Conduct of the Minority*, when it first became public, naturally gave great offence to Fox and the few friends who remained steadily attached to him as their political leader. Burke was ac-

\* Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 165.

† See *ante*, p. 410.

cused of attempting to destroy by underhand means the reputation of an old friend to whom he had become most bitterly hostile. This charge was not just ; and yet it may perhaps be regretted that Burke ever wrote the *Observations on the Conduct of the Minority*. It is certainly the least pleasing of all his compositions. The Duke of Portland might be excused for saying that he could not follow Burke in all his conclusions, and gently declining to accept all his interpretations of Fox's conduct. There is an apparent desire throughout the work to look upon everything the Opposition leader did in the worst light, and to attribute to him the worst motives. The picture, powerful as it is, has too much shade. No redeeming features, no gentle touches are to be seen. After an attentive contemplation the impression left upon the mind is one of harshness and pain.

This, true from an artistic point of view, is still truer morally, if art and morals can ever be looked at from a different ground. The work is full of insinuations about Fox having, since the French Revolution, adopted some ambitious schemes almost incompatible with his allegiance as a subject of King George the Third. In other publications of Burke at this period similar hints, though not quite so broadly, are unmistakably given. But surely these were in no respect justified by facts. Burke ought to have known Fox better. He knew how absurd had been the imputations of the enemies of his Indian Bill, about the Coalition leaders designedly seeking to interfere with the King's prerogative, and placing India under Fox's dictatorship. Any suspicions that Fox in the time of the French Revolution thought of acting the part of a Catiline or a Cæsar, and, by overthrowing the British Constitution, attempting to establish his own power, were

quite as unfounded. He was certainly not, in any bad sense of the term, an ambitious man ; but easy, good-natured, and disinterested even to a fault. We might wish indeed that those better qualities of his nature had been more fully displayed in his quarrel with Burke, who was so much his senior, and had given so many proofs of attachment to him ; forbearance on Fox's part, especially under the circumstances, would have been singularly graceful and appropriate : but, though this generosity was not shown, posterity will do to the two statesmen that justice which neither of them was prepared to do to each other, and unhesitatingly admit that in taking such different views of the French Revolution, and recommending such different policies, they were both free from all self-seeking, mercenary, and sordid motives. When they went wrong, it was their virtues that led them astray. Burke and Fox were however far too much displeased with each other to admit this fact. Fox saw his party reduced to an insignificant minority, entirely, as he believed, owing to Burke's wrong-headedness and unkindness ; and Burke, horrified at the crimes which he saw perpetrated in dreadful succession on the other side of the Channel, and justly alarmed at the years of agitation, conflict, and bloodshed which he thought impending over Europe, could not make allowances for the actions of one who had not his own intense sensibility and his far-reaching foresight.

Burke's life was this autumn far from happy. Public calamities always affected him almost as acutely as private sorrows. During the American struggle and that war which was now in progress, many a Minister who had devised plans of warfare, and many a general who had to carry them into effect slept soundly and lived

gaily, while Burke, who had officially nothing to do with the success or failure of a campaign, felt at his own fire-side and in his own bed restless apprehensions for the political consequences which the execution of those military manœuvres might entail. In early manhood, with unimpaired physical strength, plenty of animal spirits, and many years of life apparently before him, he might successfully carry out his theory about "living pleasant." But it was not so easy to embody this precept in old age, with many domestic troubles, and many harrowing anxieties for public causes with which his name had become inseparably associated.

He could not conceal from himself that, though not a Minister of the Crown, for the war against republican France he had a particular responsibility. With that war his reputation as a statesman and, what he considered of much more consequence, the destinies of England for generations, were inseparably associated. Yet from the time of the declaration of hostilities in the last February, throughout the whole summer and autumn, the war had been begun and was conducted in a manner contrary to his ideas and opposed to his principles. He found that the English Ministers would no more listen to his advice than the Emperor or the King of Prussia; and he saw them with grief and shame pursue the same narrow and selfish policy which had hitherto paralyzed the arms of the allies, converted victories into defeats, and frustrated all their politics.

Never had a Minister a greater opportunity than Pitt when England entered into the war. The road of conquest was open before him; it seemed that he had but to stretch out his arms and victory would be within his grasp. In one campaign Paris might have been at his



mercy, the progress of the Revolution effectually checked, and the monarchy, with any reasonable securities for constitutional freedom, satisfactorily restored. Yet Pitt suffered this great opportunity to pass away, never to return; had he designedly wished to create and establish the military spirit in revolutionary France, which at last burst all barriers and swept over Europe, he could not have acted better for such a purpose than he did. To Burke, who carefully watched events, it soon became evident that the English Minister, who had been so successful in his domestic policy, who while a mere boy had vanquished a Coalition of great statesmen at the head of a large Parliamentary following, and whose words were received with acclamation by an admiring majority whenever he rose to speak in the House of Commons, with the outstretched arm and imposing attitude of his father, was utterly incompetent to direct a great war. The fact which Burke saw sooner than any one else, and with surprise and alarm, is now a matter of history. The great Mr. Pitt, the applauded oracle of a submissive senate, was helplessly incapable when he sat down at his desk to plan and organize a campaign.

The situation, of which the Minister might have made himself the master, appeared to Burke simple in the extreme. We had not professed to make war against France as a nation, but against Jacobin France. To all intents and purposes this was a civil war. The Jacobins were a small minority of the French people, in possession of the capital; on the fall of the Girondists seventy-three departments out of the eighty-nine were on the verge of rebellion. Another rebellion in favour of the monarchy was actually raging in La Vendée, and, notwithstanding all the efforts of the Jacobins to extinguish it,

appeared to gather strength and to threaten Paris. As a great maritime power, with a powerful fleet sweeping the seas, England could throw any amount of force she pleased on the coast to support the Vendéans; and with all the emigrant French nobility ready to rally round the standard of the monarchy, the English Government had but to choose the means and opportunity of establishing the royal authority, and overthrowing the Jacobin forces before they had assumed the gigantic development they afterwards attained. Toulon, the most important French naval port, actually put itself into our hands; and there, although we nominally took possession of it in the name of the King of France, we actually hoisted the standard of England, instead of the white flag of the Bourbons; and by showing the most miserable jealousy of the French marine, acted as though effectually to prevent any other town following the example, and trusting to our disinterested sympathies for the cause of the French monarchy. In the North-west, like the rest of the allies, instead of, as Burke had so strongly advised, advancing boldly against Paris, we contented ourselves with making war on fortified frontier towns; and as soon as Valenciennes capitulated in July we allowed that garrison to march out with the honours of war, to be employed against the internal enemies of the Jacobin republic, and by this means, in Burke's opinion, completely neutralized all the advantages we had obtained. The very choice Mr. Pitt made of a General was ominous. It was his Royal Highness the Duke of York, who had been only known as the companion of his brother, the Prince of Wales, in his follies and dissipations. This great commander, after the capitulation of Valenciennes, proceeded, under the direction of the English Ministry, to lay siege to

Dunkirk. This, too, it was obvious, was for purely English interests, and not for those of the French monarchy. In the same narrow spirit, for Prussian interests, the King of Prussia besieged Condé, and for Austrian interests the German Emperor besieged Mayence; and after their capitulation, those garrisons also, like that of Valenciennes, were allowed to march out and act against our natural allies, the Vendéans, and other internal foes of the Jacobin republic. The war, which was begun by proclaiming the most disinterested principles, was in fact carried on for the most selfish ends. The consequence was that there was neither concert nor union. Though the Jacobin republic was everywhere threatened, though Austria, Prussia, and England were on the northern frontiers, though Spain was advancing through the Pyrenees and Sardinia down the slopes of the Alps, though there was internal rebellion both in the South and the West, at Lyons and in La Vendée, and Toulon was in possession of the enemy, yet were the Jacobins, before the close of the year, to make head against all their adversaries; instead of being combated as a faction, they were combated as a nation, and, owing to the insincerity and duplicity of their enemies, were allowed to assume to themselves the merit of fighting for the national cause in endeavouring to prevent the dismemberment of France. Pitt, though considered by themselves their greatest enemy, was, through his incapacity, in fact their greatest friend. By allowing them to identify their cause with that of the nation, and, against Burke's strongest remonstrances, neglecting the partisans of the French monarchy and all the advantages which La Vendée offered, and making war on the old and narrow principles of routine, he played into their hands and gave them the game.

As the contest was carried on, Burke suffered much obloquy from the opponents of the war for a policy which was not in any respect his own, and against which he had strongly protested. His opinions at the time were not generally known ; but he omitted no opportunity of earnestly impressing them, though without avail, on the English Ministers. His sagacity was as much displayed in criticizing the conduct of the war as on any other subject during his long life. He wrote long letters to his friend Windham during the autumn, giving full expression to his forebodings and apprehensions ; and time fully confirmed the correctness of his views. Twice he went to town, and stayed nearly a week at each visit, to enforce personally on Pitt and Dundas the necessity of effectually co-operating with the Vendéans before they could be finally overpowered. He earnestly besought them to make use of the French gentlemen burning with zeal to go to the succour of the brave struggling peasants in the West, who for eight months had kept the republican levies at bay. The Comte d'Artois wrote to Burke a letter, at the same time enclosing one his Royal Highness had received from the Vendean chiefs, requesting him to come among them and put himself at their head. The Comte earnestly entreated Burke to apply on his part to the English Government, that they might aid him to comply with the wishes of the brave champions of the French monarchy. He asked for no great army. He asked for little assistance. He was ready to proceed even in a private capacity, and only wished that Pitt and Dundas would countenance his going. At the time when Burke received the Comte's letter, he was actually again writing to Dundas, strongly counselling the Government to take some measures to support the Vendéans. No-

thing could be more reasonable than such a policy ; nothing more honourable than the Bourbon prince's application. But Burke, in reply to the Comte d'Artois' request, could only express himself respectfully and sadly. Everything indeed that the letter suggested he had already done. He was not, he told the Comte, in his Majesty's counsels, had no weight with the Ministers, and his title of Privy Councillor was a mere name. “Be assured, Sir,” he truly added, “that many a little clerk in office whom you have never heard of, and others yet less in the eyes of the world, have fifty times more real power and influence than I have ; and that, in affairs in which both in my Parliamentary capacity and in the capacity of a man who attempts to address the public by writing, I have taken a large part.”\*

The auspicious moment was allowed to slip away. The Vendean insurrection was put down ; the gallant adherents to the monarchy ruthlessly slaughtered ; their country laid waste with fire and sword. But it is admitted, even by French writers in favour of the republicans, that had a few English regiments been sent into La Vendée at the time when Burke so strongly recommended the project, had they been well supplied with arms and equipments from the sea, as the English Government had it in its power to do, and had the services of the emigrant nobles been employed in the scene where they could have acted with such vigour and effect under a Bourbon prince, the movement would have been successful, and the modern history of Europe might have entirely changed its features. Unsupported as they were, the only surprise is, that the Vendean peasants did so much. The greater portion of the population of other

\* Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 188. .

parts of France would have gladly welcomed any deliverer from the horrors of the Reign of Terror, when the citizens of Lyons were being fusilladed in batches of hundreds at a time by Collot-d'Herbois, or when the waters of the Loire, at Nantes, were being choked by corpses during the terrible noyades of Carrier.

But Pitt and his colleagues, with the foreign Governments nominally in alliance with England, seemed incapable of grasping at a sound, magnanimous, and generous policy. Burke was almost in despair as *Gazette* after *Gazette* came out in the autumn, and all the information from the various seats of war showed him the weakness, folly, and miscarriage of their plans. Making one last effort to induce the Ministers to embrace a better system of warfare, in October he began his *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies with respect to France*. Like some of his preceding treatises, this also was not intended for immediate publication, but for circulation among the Ministers and other eminent politicians, in the hope of influencing the measures of the Government. If it did nothing else, it at least relieved his mind by satisfying his conscience. It placed his opinions on record. Those who should take an interest in the events of his time would at least be able to judge between him and the English Ministry. He had indeed been the advocate of war, but not of such a war. He had advised a war against a proselyting Jacobinism and for the restoration of the French monarchy with the aid of the French monarchists, and not a war which was to take advantage of the dissensions in France, to make a conquest of frontier towns, seaports, and West Indian sugar islands, for the selfish aggrandisement of Prussia, Austria, and England. His *Remarks* entered into a detailed criticism of

the contest as it had hitherto been conducted, and from which he anticipated only disgrace. They also elaborately developed his own system of policy, and contained many most profound and striking reflections on the circumstances of the time. Taking for granted, in accordance with the royal proclamation when the war began, that we had declared in favour of establishing the French monarchy, Burke clearly shows that the plan which the allied sovereigns had pursued totally set aside as of no account the most natural defenders of the royal authority, and in fact went to render a Restoration impossible. It gave every advantage to the Jacobins, and brought nothing but odium on the royal cause. Those who read the Remarks with attention, and with a due consideration of the events to which they referred, will certainly not be ready to adopt the ideas of Burke's opponents, and regard him as, on this subject, a passionate and extravagant enthusiast, entirely governed by his sensibility and imagination. His notions on the war are singularly sensible and practicable. Had others, without any claim to his imagination and sensibility, and who were never looked upon as wild enthusiasts, had so just a view of affairs as he had throughout the summer and autumn of 1793, England might have been yet unencumbered with some hundred millions of national debt and have saved many thousands of valuable lives.

Not only has the Tory historian, Sir Archibald Alison, nothing to say in favour of the manner in which Pitt made war at this time, but Burke's views have received even stronger confirmation from still more exceptionable quarters. M. Thiers has composed his History of the Revolution and the subsequent Consulship and Empire with all the clearness and precision which are so much

the characteristic of French literature. No one who has written on that eventful time shows less philosophical transcendentalism or visionary enthusiasm. The highest authority in the present imperial France has dubbed him as pre-eminently the "national historian." His partiality to England, or his readiness to admit anything that tells against the military glory of the French Republic and Empire, will not be suspected. Yet even M. Thiers, in writing of this very year 1793 and the military operations of the allies, admits without qualification that Burke's views were just. "Fortunately for the Revolution," says the French historian, "the allies, adhering to the methodical plan laid down at the opening of the campaign, would not push forward on any one point, and determined not to penetrate into France until the King of Prussia, after taking Mentz, should be enabled to advance, on his part, into the heart of our provinces. Had there been any genius or any union among the generals of the coalition, the cause of the Revolution would have been undone." Again: "Our situation in the month of July, 1793, was the more desperate, inasmuch as a mortal blow might have been struck at France on every point. In the North, the allies had but to neglect the fortresses and to march upon Paris, and they would have driven the Convention upon the Loire, where it would have been received by the Vendéans. The Austrians and Piedmontese could have executed an invasion of the maritime Alps, annihilated our army and overrun the whole of the South as conquerors. The Spaniards were in a position to advance by Bayonne and to join La Vendée, or, if they preferred, Roussillon, to march boldly towards La Lozère, not far distant from the frontiers, and to set the South in flames. Lastly, the English, instead of cruis-



ing in the Mediterranean, possessed the means of landing troops in La Vendée and conducting them from Saumur to Paris."\*

In the summer and autumn of 1795, Pitt vainly tried, with much loss, to restore in the West of France the state of things of which he did not avail himself in the summer and autumn of 1793. Everything was, however, altered. The republican strength was then firmly organized, and the Vendéans had been completely crushed. The Minister found, as Burke told him in those Remarks on the Policy of the Allies, that it was impossible for a politician to make a situation. He had neglected one of the finest ready-made to his hands, and it was cruel, foolish, and hopeless to attempt to bring it back again.

Burke, from the commencement of the war, was indeed as distinctly opposed to the Ministers as to Fox, though his opposition did not take an unfriendly form. He preferred intentionally remaining on terms of ordinary intimacy with them, that he might make a few seasonable suggestions when they might be of real service. They reciprocated this good feeling. When the news of the capitulation of Valenciennes arrived, Dundas is said to have informed him of it by special messenger from Downing Street; and Burke, when he received it, happening to be at the little theatre of Chalfont-St.-Peter, stopped the performance and read what would now be called the official telegram, to the rural audience.

To the outward world, and especially to men of letters, he could still assume his old cheerfulness, gratifying Arthur Murphy, in return for a respectful dedication of his translation of Tacitus, with a letter of thanks and

\* History of the French Revolution, by M. Thiers, referring to the year 1793.

some valuable critical observations on the Roman historians; and receiving Gibbon, who had returned from the shores of Lake Lemman to comfort his friend Lord Sheffield on the death of his wife, with so much courtesy and kindness that the great English historian was quite charmed with his host, and confessed that "he had spent a delightful day with Burke."\*

To be sure, Gibbon had reason for being charmed. He had recanted his religious as Lord Sheffield had recanted his political heresies. When he read the *Reflections*, at Geneva, he declared that he admired Burke's eloquence and chivalry so much that he could almost forgive his defence of ecclesiastical establishments. Since then the drums of the Jacobins had been heard near his tranquil Swiss retreat, and horrified by their crimes, his philosophy had been much disturbed. At the close of the first half of his history, with the conquest of Rome by the barbarians, he had demonstrated, greatly to his own satisfaction and the rest of the learned, that never again could civilization and the polite world be subverted by barbarians; that there were no more Goths, Huns, and Tartars ready to pour out of the forests on great capitals; that gunpowder and artillery had been invented, making a civilized man more than a match for the spears and arms of the savage; and that the great and powerful empire of Russia was a sufficient security against any rude invasions from the North. A very few years had passed since those very comforting reflections on the subjugation of Rome; but the wisdom of history, which Bolingbroke had authoritatively pronounced to be "philosophy teaching by examples," had been sadly rebuked. During the

\* Letter to Lord Sheffield, Nov. 25, 1793: *Gibbon's Miscellanies*, p. 183, edit. 1837.

last year civilization had been again endangered. Barbarians had once more taken possession of a great capital, in the very heart of which they had grown up side by side with all that was polite and refined. At Lyons, in very disagreeable proximity to Geneva, deeds were being done from which Attila and his Huns would have shrunk. It was doubtless a fine thing to polish periods full of contemptuous irony against religion, to be read and admired by sceptical Abbés and Marquises; but Gibbon's philosophy was a philosophy for the wearers of swords, wigs, and ruffles. It had never been intended for the Sansculottes. He was, as Burke said, alarmed into reflection. Philosophers were actually being guillotined. Bailly and Condorcet were just as polite, as sceptical, and almost as learned, as Gibbon. The neat, precise, corpulent, and chubby little gentleman felt with horror that the Jacobins were his natural enemies, and that he was their natural prey. On returning to England, he never thought of attempting to pass through France; but though the roads were very dusty and his health was far from good, he had kept at a respectful distance on the outskirts of the French frontiers. It was quite a comfort to Gibbon to be again conversing on friendly terms with Burke, who, during his absence at Geneva, had grown so famous as the antagonist of the French Revolution. In his zeal against Jacobinism he was ready to go beyond Burke himself; and he who in his elaborate folios had delighted to ridicule monks, priests, church establishments, and Christianity itself, was actually now prepared to uphold the Inquisition.

Gibbon only felt the same delight as many other visitors who at this season partook of Burke's hospitality at Beaconsfield. The table as the door was in fact at this

time almost open to all ; and an English visitor coming unexpectedly found almost a French table-d'hôte of a very superior class. The emigrants of all ranks and degrees suffering in the cause of the monarchy were ever welcome. A visitor from Ireland, ready to promote with Burke and his son the removal of the Catholic disabilities, found the same cordial hospitality. The host was all kindness and courtesy. In his address, as one of the most discriminating of those visitors remarked, there was blended something of the dignified formality of the old school with an unaffected warmth and geniality which delighted all who crossed the threshold.

The autumn leaves were falling ; the sad winter was at hand. Few of those who sat at Burke's board, as the year 1793 was ending, thought how soon that happy household was to be broken up ; how soon death, mourning, and sorrow, which would admit of no comfort on this side of the grave, were to enter the gates ; how soon the thunderbolt was to fall on that cheerful hearth, and the great and good old man to stand desolate and broken-hearted there, his household gods all shivered around him, his dearest hopes in a moment destroyed. M. de Cazales, who was quite at home as one of the family, thought only of making everybody laugh at his ridiculous blunders in English. Richard Burke, the elder, that proverbial humourist, felt himself almost undone in his own province by the boisterous French orator ; and though Dick was still cheerful, and even gay, yet during the last month or two his strong animal spirits had not been so exuberant as usual. Richard Burke the younger would sit contented to be unnoticed at the dinner-table, seldom taking any prominent part in the general conversation, but indulging in a few quiet remarks to one or

two of those who sat nearest him, and could hear what he said in an undertone. He too had not lately felt himself quite well; he had a dry cough, and a slight affection of the chest; but of course this was nothing: in winter many delicate persons had coughs and chest affections without their friends feeling much alarmed.

One evening Mr. William Smith, a young Irish barrister who had solicited Burke's notice by some writings against Paine, and when in Ireland corresponded with Richard on the business of the Roman Catholics, arrived at this time on a visit. He found the family assembled round the dinner-table, and afterwards put on record his observations for Mr. Prior. Young Richard, though suffering in health, was as eager for business as usual. Pitt had consented to an interview with him the next morning on the affairs of Ireland, which Richard had so much at heart, and, though both his father and his mother were anxious that he should postpone this engagement for a few days until the weather became milder and his cold better, he was not to be controlled. He put a stop to their kind hints and indirect remonstrances, which were spoken at rather than to him, by saying in an offhand manner, “I shall go however;” and some time afterwards reminded one of the ladies to have her commissions for town ready that evening, as he intended to set off early in the morning.\*

Richard was anxious to do so much. The east winds might blow, the snow fall, the cold be piercing, and his cough troublesome; but he was not to be deterred by such inconveniences from riding forth early in the morning to London to converse with the Prime Minister about the Irish Roman Catholics. And that time

\* Prior, p. 353.

next year, when the cold season came round, what would be the business of the Catholics, or any other business, to him? His poor remains would be lying peaceably in the old church, that looked so hoary, grim, and cheerless as he rode past it through the town of Beaconsfield that cold winter morning.

Little thinking of what was so soon approaching, Burke was more anxious for the health of his wife than for that of his son. Her rheumatic affection required that she should not be exposed to any sudden cold; and every evening before the ladies left the dinner-table Burke would himself go to the drawing-room, and by personally examining the thermometers placed there, satisfy himself that the air had attained the proper degree of heat. He was kindness itself to those who sat at his board and slept beneath his roof. The house was a proud and happy place. There might be cold without, but there was no coldness within. The Christmas of 1793 saw no social circle more pleasant, cheerful, and loving; none who were present dreamed that it would be the last of those happy anniversaries the family would see. As Burke looked around he beheld all those who were nearest and dearest in blood to him, assembled under his roof; his brother, who had fifty-two years before gone with him to Abraham Shackleton's school; his noble and true wife, who had loved the young author of the treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful; his son, who had grown up in his image, and had for years been his constant companion and counsellor; his niece, the wild Irish girl, as she had appeared to Miss Burney, when first imported, and who had now become the blushing bride of Captain Haviland; and even that dear friend and kinsman, William Burke, with whom he had studied

and rambled in early manhood, found himself, from distant India and after many vicissitudes, once more with the family this Christmas at home. At last they were all again together, happy and united as of old. The glass might indeed go pleasantly round, and the Christmas log blaze brighter than ever. The Jacobin furies raged in Paris, but Robespierre and his bloody confederates could not interfere with the Christmas party met together in love and unity at Beaconsfield: so soon to separate for ever, and one member of it a little earlier, another a little later, to travel the dark road alone.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

1794-1795.

## HEART-BROKEN.

As Burke had anticipated in his Remarks on the Policy of the Allies, the campaign of the year terminated everywhere with disgrace to the combined Powers. The operations of the British army on the Continent had been unsuccessful; the Prussians had been completely checked, and the Austrians again driven across the Rhine; and, so far as the honour of England was concerned, we had sustained the most serious loss of all by being compelled to evacuate Toulon. In the manner this was executed the English Government wantonly incurred a complete plethora of disgrace, which was truly astonishing. Lord North's administration during the worst periods of the American war, never acted with greater want of foresight and capacity than Pitt and his Ministry at the beginning of this war with the French Republic. Toulon having surrendered to us as the professed allies of the French monarchy, we had certainly no right to use the advantages conceded to us for merely selfish purposes; and yet on leaving the town we set to work to burn the French fleet, which had come into our possession by no fortune of war nor right of conquest, and which, according to the principles we had proclaimed, belonged to the representatives of the French monarchy. "Toulon,"



wrote Burke to Windham, "is not only a calamitous, but, in my mind, a most disgraceful affair. We really stand in need of men of capacity for matters of the least difficulty."

He spent the earlier portion of the January of 1794 quietly at Beaconsfield. He was in no haste to come to town for the meeting of Parliament, disapproving very much both of the manner in which the Ministry had conducted the war, and the Opposition had advocated a peace. At the time however there was no question but that the war must go on. This much even Fox confessed. A letter was sent to Beaconsfield containing his sentiments on the subject. They were not however to Burke very satisfactory. "I see nothing very distinct," said he, "except that Mr. Fox has not changed his original opinions with regard to the impolicy of the war." Reports were spread abroad stating that Fox and Burke would come to a reconciliation, and that there would be a general coalition of parties to carry on the struggle against revolutionary France. To young Richard Burke, who was in London, and had in a letter informed him of these rumours, Burke replied, "I am perfectly persuaded that the last thing in the world which Fox will do is to endeavour to reconcile himself with me. If he should, I confess I should feel myself in a very awkward situation. But I do not apprehend any such thing."\* On arriving in town however he found that proposals of a union with the Government were seriously entertained through the medium of the Duke of Portland; and that there was to be a general meeting of the Whigs at Burlington House to take the question into consideration. Burke doubted whether his presence would be likely to

\* Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 214.

promote the object in view, and thought of absenting himself. But the Duke wrote to him, requesting his attendance ; and he signified his readiness to comply with his Grace's wish. Just at the time however he had to attend a mournful duty far more interesting to his heart than those political deliberations, important as he considered them to be.

His brother Richard died. He had spent the previous evening with Burke and his family in Duke Street, St. James's. He had been at their supper-table as gay and rattling as ever. He had retired to chambers he sometimes occupied in Lincoln's Inn at midnight ; and at three o'clock the next morning, the fourth of February, scarcely two years since he had followed, weeping, his friend Sir Joshua Reynolds to his last resting-place in Westminster Abbey, and had been almost struck motionless with grief when the solemn notes of the organ pealed forth as the body of the great artist was carried down the aisle, Richard Burke the elder suddenly expired. He was, and deservedly, beloved by them all. With all his boisterous humour and gaiety, his disposition was kind and affectionate in the extreme ; his heart to the last was as tender as that of a child. His hearty laugh was sadly missed in the house that had echoed with it so long. From his brother, except during the time he had spent in the West Indies more than twenty years before, Burke had scarcely ever been separated ; and Dick's good humour and ready waggery had been constantly useful in dispelling many a cloud from the statesman's brow. To Richard, the younger, whom he had loved so deeply, and to whom he had been so pleasant a companion, the loss was also great. With hearts full of real sorrow, Burke and his son were the chief mourners at the funeral.

As they saw the remains lowered into the grave beneath the family pew in the church at Beaconsfield, they little thought how soon that grave would be re-opened, and another coffin be deposited in it by the side of poor Dick's.

His brother's death interfered for a fortnight in February with Burke's political duties in London. He was however far from idle. William Burke, after his return from India, had in the preceding autumn translated Brissot's Address to his Constituents, an elaborate manifesto of the Girondin party, just before their final struggle with the Jacobins, which terminated so disastrously for the author and his friends by the insurrection of the thirty-first of May. The document laid bare the politics of the contending adversaries, putting of course most of the blame on the Jacobins, but openly avowing the hostile designs of both parties on other countries, and particularly with respect to Belgium, in whose defence England had avowedly taken up arms. The public, not being then through the newspapers made so familiar with every important French pamphlet as now, William thought that the publication of Brissot's Address in English would seasonably assist the cause which Edmund had so much at heart. Burke concurred in this idea, but on reading William's manuscript was not at all satisfied with the manner in which the translation had been executed. William having been so long in India, had not kept himself so minutely informed on every event as to catch at once the exact meaning of every turn of expression referring to it; and besides, the French language itself, as Burke was one of the first to point out, was undergoing a change somewhat analogous to that which had passed over the institutions of the country. "The

translation you have made," he said to William, "will not do without some considerable corrections, because the sense is frequently mistaken ; and I do not wonder at it; for besides that in truth the very language of France has suffered considerable alterations since you were conversant with French books, the way of thinking of the nation and the correspondent official and public style is no longer the same." Before the sheets were sent to press Burke took the first opportunity of carefully revising William's translation.

But he did more. At this time, while the Reign of Terror was almost, though not quite at its culminating point, when the malignant star of Robespierre was ascending in that scene of blood, and the neck of Camille Desmoulins had actually "grazed," though not yet, with that of his friend Danton, been severed by the guillotine, Burke wrote a powerful preface to this English version of Brissot's Address, graphically delineating the circumstances in which the work originated, and the Girondin party, of which it was the defence. On the publication of the book the preface was immediately recognized as Burke's ; and, being read with general admiration, while materially increasing the circulation at the moment, has caused William Burke's translation to be remembered long after its ephemeral purpose was served. Though in the unpretending form of a preface to a French translation, it is a concise but brilliant piece of historical composition done with a master's hand. The verdict passed by Burke on the Girondins might seem harsh ; but it is a judgment which time has confirmed. Between them and the Jacobins, as he clearly shows, there was no difference in principle. It was not until their own authority was attacked, and their own necks

were in danger, that Brissot and his friends became scrupulous. It was not until they despaired of being able to keep any terms with their opponents, that they sought to throw upon them the obloquy of the September massacres. At the time when those deeds of blood were being perpetrated, though some of the Girondins were in high official stations, nothing was done by them to stop the wholesale slaughter which was deliberately planned by their colleague Danton, as Burke then positively asserted, and as the French historians, Thiers, Mignet, Lamartine, and Michelet, one and all, declare to be the fact. Some of the sentences in this Preface surprise, by their graphic force and the generality of their application, even those who are accustomed to the vigour of Burke's pen. His picture of Roland, on the morning of the third of September, 'gently speaking of the massacre on the preceding evening as "a popular effervescence," and complaining that himself and his colleagues were the objects of vague denunciations, is most characteristic. "Here," says Burke, "was a minister tremblingly alive to his own safety, dead to that of his fellow-citizens, eager to preserve his place, and worse than indifferent about its most important duties." On the inconsistency of the Girondins defending the slaughter of the tenth of August, and afterwards condemning the massacres of September, he remarks: "They endeavoured to establish a distinction by the belief of which they hoped to keep the spirit of murder safely bottled up and sealed for their own purposes, without endangering themselves by the fumes of the poison which they prepared for their enemies." And the whole course of the Revolution as it had hitherto proceeded, and still more by what was to occur afterwards in the March and July

of this year, in the parties and persons of Danton and Robespierre themselves, was to illustrate still more forcibly the tremendous moral Burke deduces from the acts of those whom he strongly censures for first being led to excuse, then justify, and afterwards commit deeds of blood: "Every part of their own policy comes round, and strikes at their own power and their own lives."

This is a lesson taught most impressively by the French Revolution. But it is a lesson upon which Mr. Carlyle and his imitators, in their dislike of rose-water revolutions and their love of strong painting and strong measures, are not much inclined to dwell. This is the diametrical difference between the philosophy of *The Reflections* and the philosophy of *The French Revolution, a History*: it is for the statesman, the moralist, and the philanthropist to say which writer in the time of revolution would be the wiser guide. There can be no question which of the two would be the less bloody. The philosophical Jacobins, such as Robespierre and his friends, were a great deal worse than their theories. Happily however some English writers have been a great deal better than their books. They have in composing histories looked with complacency, if not with approbation, on deeds which they would have shrunk with horror from perpetrating. Even Paine could not stand the massacres of August and September, and was expiating his moderation in the prison of the Luxembourg, in danger every day of being summoned to the guillotine. Fortunately for Burke, he had to act as well as write; and was careful that nothing he did and nothing he wrote should shock the ordinary notions of morality, on which, as the safest of all foundations, his political system was established.

Even the extreme of the excesses of the Jacobins had not softened him to the members of the first Constituent Assembly, who under the name of Constitutionals had, he always maintained, sown the seeds of the more serious disorders. Lafayette on his white charger, and proclaiming that insurrection was the most sacred of all duties, was scarcely more admirable to him than the brewer Santerre on his pale dray-horse at the head of the armed section of Saint-Antoine. Much as Burke sympathized with the Americans in resisting the arbitrary conduct of Lord North and the British Parliament, he did not by any means think that Lafayette was equally to be admired for crossing the seas to assist the colonists. In his eyes the hero of the two worlds found no favour, and his subsequent misfortunes no pity. On returning to his Parliamentary duties he strongly opposed, on the seventeenth of March, a motion made by Fitzpatrick requesting his Majesty to intercede for Lafayette's release from the confinement in which he had been placed after flying across the frontiers. Our interference, Burke contended, could only be construed as an insult to our allies. Besides, when he considered all that other persons were suffering in exile, in the prisons of Paris, and on the guillotine, he did not consider that the case of Lafayette was entitled to any peculiar commiseration.\* Perhaps he was right. On the whole Lafayette had fared very much better than most of his colleagues, and the king and queen whom he had pledged himself to protect. He was safer in the dungeon at Magdeburg than if he had still been a leading member of the French Government in Paris. Had he remained in France, by this time he must inevitably have been guillotined.

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iv. p. 152.

Some days afterwards a motion was made for taxing placemen and pensioners during the continuance of the war. This too Burke opposed. Nor could he be taunted justly with inconsistency, though Sheridan, with his envenomed hostility of recent sessions, again thought fit to raise the cry. A similar motion had been made during the American war, of which Burke had so much disapproved ; and yet he had then opposed the expedient, as utterly useless for any purposes of revenue, and not altogether equitable. It was scarcely to be expected that he would support such a proposal at the outset of this other war, which he regarded as most just and necessary.\*

But Sheridan's malice could not keep the bounds even of common decency. On the first of April, after Pitt had moved the order of the day for going into committee on a Volunteer Corps Bill, Francis complained of the practice of confining the debate to three or four leading statesmen, and let fall a few sarcastic remarks which were understood to be levelled both at his enemy, Pitt, and his friend, Fox. "If," said this pungent orator, "it be the object of eloquence to weary and deaden the attention of an unhappy audience, to exhaust all human patience, to efface by endless repetition an impression once made, to stupefy rather than convince, and finally to lose the votes of friends whose constitutions sink under the intolerable burden imposed upon their faculties, then indeed the gentlemen I allude to are supremely eloquent." This grievance, through the pertinacity of certain metropolitan Members, has at last been remedied. The House of Commons has now debates of six or seven nights long, when nearly every popular Member thinks it his duty to make a speech, whether he has or has not

\* See Parl. Hist., vol. xxxi. pp. 171-182.



anything to say. The consequences are interminable columns of small type in the newspapers, and a yearly increase at a prodigious ratio of Hansard's volumes of Parliamentary Debates. But the result in the increase either of amusement, instruction, or eloquence, is unfortunately not so obvious. At the time Burke took the matter up rather pleasantly, saying that he would not be unmindful of the hint, and quoting some doggrel with which his old friends during the American war had been perfectly familiar :—

“ Solid men of Boston, make no long potations ;  
Solid men of Boston, make no long orations.”

And, in answer to a question which Francis had asked, whether subscriptions for providing volunteer corps had not been encouraged during Lord Rockingham's second administration, when Fox was Secretary of State, Burke replied, “ At the period alluded to, though I held an office supposed to be very high and advantageous, yet I was as completely ignorant of what was passing in the Cabinet as any man in England.” He said, however, in conclusion, that “ Lord Rockingham was quite incapable of doing anything that he thought unconstitutional.” Sheridan then thought fit to rise, and accuse Burke of not defending Lord Rockingham as he ought to have done. He would quote another passage from the system of ethics which had regulated Burke's conduct, and, in the language of the same writer—

“ He went to Daddy Jenker, by Trimmer Hall attended ;

In such good company, good lack ! how his morals must be mended !”

Fox, said Sheridan, had only spoken to justify the noble Marquis ; but Burke had been content to declare his ignorance of what had been done in Lord Rockingham's Cabinet, and had left his memory to be defended by

others. But this was not all. Burke now, for the first time, continued Sheridan, had openly declared that he was not satisfied with his position in Lord Rockingham's second administration, and complained that he had not been a member of the Cabinet. Flagrant inconsistency! Had he not, when that government resigned, been sorry to leave the Pay-office? Had he not regretted the loss of his morning serenade of drums and fifes playing beneath his windows?

Burke thanked Sheridan for his lessons in morality. He sarcastically intimated however that the precepts might be more valuable if they had been illustrated in the life of the preceptor. With regard to the two accusations of not defending Lord Rockingham and regretting the loss of office, he said that he had not been aware that Lord Rockingham had been attacked, and he had never professed to be indifferent to office, having invariably condemned the popular cant on the subject; but he thought that his whole life would at least show, even to his most rancorous enemy, that he had never sought public honours, rank, or emolument with any extraordinary zeal. Sheridan again rose, and disclaimed any intention of attacking Burke's morality. He meant just the reverse. He thought that the right honourable gentleman had quite enough morality both for himself and all the Treasury Bench put together. In declaring that Burke had regretted leaving the Pay-office, he had only repeated his own expressions; and had he been present during the last debate he would certainly have heard direct charges of inconsistency made against Lord Rockingham. Burke replied that if he had not attended the last debate, it was because he had other business on his hands; and that certainly it was no inducement for him to come

down to the House, to find the conduct of his life perpetually ransacked and ripped up. It was also, Burke said, perfectly well known to his friends that while he was in office, owing to the misconduct of others the situation had been so disagreeable to him that he had been more than once on the point of resigning; and that no human consideration would induce him again to place himself in so unpleasant a position. He concluded by declaring that it would be better for Sheridan to refrain from attacking the public life of one whom he knew so little.\*

But Sheridan resumed his attacks on every occasion. A Bill enabling French subjects to enlist for service abroad was brought in. Sheridan declaimed against it with much violence, and asked, if these emigrants when taken prisoners by the republicans should receive no quarter, whether the British Government would, on the principle of reciprocity, act with similar barbarity? "Yes," Burke ejaculated; and for this he was solemnly admonished as proclaiming the most atrocious doctrines, though there seemed nothing so very inhuman in declaring that those who gave no quarter should receive no quarter in return. In answer to Sheridan's declamations against despotism and in favour of liberty, Burke most truly argued that such expressions as applied to the state of France were merely words without the slightest meaning. As we had been in the habit of talking about the liberty of the Fleet and the liberty of the King's Bench, this was the only kind of liberty France enjoyed. Her liberty centred in a gaol. The debtors in the King's Bench were in a much more enviable state than many of the citizens of Paris, in the spring of 1794, after the

\* *Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxxi. pp. 208-11.

execution of Danton and Camille Desmoulins, when the property and lives of all Frenchmen, at this climax of the Reign of Terror, were at the mercy of the passionless yet fanatic Robespierre and his evil satellites, the paralytic Couthon and the gloomy St. Just. Nothing, said Burke, that Milton could imagine of hell was more terrible than the condition of France. Even Philip Francis, in the course of the debate, affirmed that he agreed with much of what Burke had said ; and Charles Grey, after complimenting Burke in the highest terms, and saying that from many of his opinions it was impossible to dissent, declared that rather than live under the Committee of Public Safety in Paris, he would prefer the dominion of a Nero or Caligula.\*

What further testimony could any man receive to his political foresight? The course Burke had taken in separating from his party rather than countenance in their beginning the visionary projects of freedom in France, surely then admitted of some justification. England was horror-struck. Europe rang with execrations of wholesale murder. Still Sheridan paused not in his sneers, personalities, and sarcasms, and even attempted to wound Burke in his tenderest part. In the debates on the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, in speaking of the Convention of delegates that had met nominally to promote Parliamentary Reform, Sheridan observed, that surely Burke did not disapprove of all Conventions. Was not his own son acting as an agent of the Roman Catholic Convention in Ireland? Burke replied that the Roman Catholic Association was not a Convention, nor had ever assumed the name. The Roman Catholics had first met for a most laudable and constitutional purpose,

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxxi. pp. 377, 379, 382, and 386.

that of respectfully petitioning Parliament to share in the privileges of British citizens ; and after that petition had been scornfully rejected, they elected deputies and formed themselves into an Association for an especial, avowed, and constitutional object.\* Indeed, it was not while poor Richard Burke lived that the Irish Roman Catholics began to entertain any dangerous views : if they were afterwards thrown into the hands of the democratic agitators, it was entirely owing to the vacillating conduct of Pitt and the English Government ; and it was this very alternative that Burke and his son by their far-sighted counsels sought most anxiously to avoid.

Though Sheridan knew it not, Burke was eager to escape from the false position in which he had been placed ever since his separation from his party. To attend the House of Commons was now to him no pleasure, and he saw with joy the certain prospect of his deliverance.

The impeachment of Hastings had again been resumed in February. Again, however, delays had intervened, but not through any fault of Burke and the rest of the Managers for the Commons. Lord Cornwallis had just returned from India, and Hastings wished to have the benefit of this nobleman's evidence in his favour. Some days elapsed before Lord Cornwallis could appear. There was more wrangling and quarrelling. There were more disputes about the admissibility of evidence. The Lords again of course took time to consider ; again they retired to their own House ; and again the Judges were consulted in private, instead of, as Burke strongly contended, according to the best and most constitutional precedents, the legal questions being put to them, and

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxxi. pp. 517-519.

their answers returned in open Court. All the marked features which the trial had displayed through six years were only the more strongly developed at this season. Burke and Law were constantly in collision, the statesman arguing sometimes perhaps with unreasonable pertinacity and vehemence ; the lawyer replying with a harshness, arrogance, and assumption anything but becoming. Burke was immeasurably Law's superior, and deserved, even if his views had been sometimes erroneous, to be treated with respect, for his years, attainments, and genius, as well as for being the representative of the House of Commons. But Law thought fit to speak and act in a manner which Burke not unjustly characterized as "insolence;" and this conduct never would have been tolerated had not, throughout the whole impeachment, a majority of the Peers been strongly prejudiced in Hastings's favour. Thurlow, who up till very lately had presided at the trial, was in temper and disposition, as well as by his prepossessions, on the side of the accused, Law's natural ally. The two men may in fact, the one from the judgment seat and the other from the box of Hastings's counsel, be considered to have directed the conduct of the Lords on most disputed questions. It was of course right in Law to do his best for his client, and strain every point to the utmost in his favour ; but neither Thurlow nor Law could, by their most partial admirers, ever be regarded as men eminent for their humanity, their sympathy for the oppressed, or their attachment to popular freedom. Neither of them will ever be quoted as a great constitutional authority. Politicians, statesmen, and lawyers of a very different stamp have asserted and established the liberties of England. The question therefore still is whether, under the

dictatorship of such men in deciding point after point against Burke and the Managers of the impeachment, and deliberately restricting the proceedings according to the narrow technicalities of the Courts below, the Lords were really acting according to strict constitutional precedent, as interpreted by the best authorities in the best of times, or whether they were not sacrificing the rights of the House of Commons and the supremacy of Parliament to their prejudices against the impeachment and their sympathies with Hastings?

This is a grave consideration. The future historian will have to weigh it attentively, and in quite a different temper from that displayed by Thurlow and Dr. Markham on the judgment-seat, by Law as the leading counsel for the defence of Hastings, and the subservient majority of Tory Peers who remembered the struggle with the Coalition, and voted steadily with the Court. It is accordingly to be regretted that no trustworthy and impartial account of the whole course of proceedings at the trial has ever yet been published. The report, published by Debrett, is not always accurate, very imperfect, given throughout with a strong, and indeed unconcealed bias in favour of Hastings, and was doubtless either by him or by Major Scott liberally paid for.

As the impeachment was at length drawing to a close, Burke was anxious to supply other materials for judging on the points which had been raised during the prosecution than the merely formal records of decisions. This was his object in moving during the last session for the Committee to report on the Causes of the Duration of the Trial. He lost no time in renewing his proposition in the session then in progress, as he had fully determined that, if his duties as Manager of the impeachment

terminated before the prorogation, to retire from Parliament altogether. He was more fortunate with his motion this year. He employed most of his time in March and the following month in drawing up the Report, which he finally presented to the House on the thirtieth of April.

It was such a Report as has seldom been made to a House of Commons. Members expected probably some copper and a little silver: he gave them gold of the purest ore, and diamonds of the richest lustre. Read to the House, and inserted among Burke's works, under the dry and unpretending title of a Report on the Causes of the Duration of Mr. Hastings's Trial, it is this, but it is also much more. It is a powerful criticism on the different questions which had arisen in the course of the impeachment, and had been decided against the Managers by Thurlow and the majority of the Peers. It shows how much learning, how much real knowledge, how much constitutional principle animated Burke in those vehement contests with Counsellor Law and the Lords on the forms of proceeding, and demonstrates abundantly, even in the cloudy atmosphere of legal technicalities, how habitually, as Coleridge remarked, Burke referred to principles, how much he was a scientific statesman. And yet in all his reasoning on this subject, as on all political matters, no man was ever freer from arbitrary theory. All his conclusions are based on facts. He does not seek for precedents to justify principles, but deduces the principle from the precedent. The learning shown in this Report is truly astonishing; but, unlike the black-letter learning of mere lawyers, subjected to the analysis of his imaginative and philosophical intellect it becomes really knowledge, lighting up the path of the constitu-



tion, and showing us vividly the landmarks of our freedom. The Relation of the Judges to the Court of Parliament, the Jurisdiction of the Lords, the Law of Parliament, the Rules of Pleading, the Conduct of the Commons in Pleading, the Publicity of the Judges' Opinions, General Publicity, the Mode of Putting Questions, Debates on Evidence, Circumstantial Evidence, the Order and Time of Producing Evidence, and the Practice Below, form all distinct and separate heads, which Burke deliberately examines according to the practice of the constitution in other times, and contrasts with the proceedings of the Lords on this impeachment. There can be no doubt that he was right in the main. There can be no doubt that before the full establishment of their power the Commons in asserting their privileges against the Crown, and particularly in impeaching great state offenders, such as the Earl of Strafford, carried matters with a high hand. They undoubtedly refused to submit their privileges to the judgment of the Courts in Westminster Hall, and in their trials wisely declined to be governed by the ordinary legal formalities, because at a time when the Judges held their offices at the mere pleasure of the Crown, and could in no respect be considered independent, the cause of freedom would have had little chance before such tribunals. In the season of conflict between privilege and prerogative, the people of England would have had no liberties if the great and wise men who then led the House of Commons had been content to accept what a majority of the Judges in the inferior Courts, considered to be their liberties. It was Burke's duty, as the leading Manager of the impeachment, according to the example of his predecessors, to maintain that the law of Parliament was something above and beyond the

ordinary civil and common law. His opinions had frequently been overruled: the claims he set up had repeatedly been negatived by the Lords acting strictly on the opinions of the Judges whom they consulted, and without whom they had so steadily refused to proceed with the trial. But he owed to himself, not through his neglect or acquiescence, to allow the rights of the Commons of England to fall into abeyance. Hence his industry in drawing up this Report, which, by being inserted in the Journals, preserved on record for all who in future times should take an interest in such things his protest against the manner in which the friends of Hastings had succeeded, for his benefit, in narrowing the method of proceeding of the highest Court in the land on an impeachment by the House of Commons. This Report stands alone in the literature of English jurisprudence. Those who have been most capable of judging of its merits, have been most enthusiastic in their admiration of it as an unrivalled model of philosophical criticism on the law of England.\* In this age of extempore debating and impromptu leading articles, the indefatigable industry which was exemplified in Burke's life, and particularly in such a product as this Report, as much as in the noblest qualities of genius, can scarcely be comprehended. Even to understand the ramifications of such a career is an effort beyond the strength of ordinary political students. How many ready writers of leading articles, and unhesitating critics of Burke's conduct on the impeachment of Hastings, have ever read this original and masterly production, which such a man as James Mill so glowingly eulogized, and which some of the most

\* See the *Edinburgh Review*, vol. xlviii. p. 463. See also the observations of Mr. Mill in his *History of British India*, vol. v. p. 231-2.

enlightened lawyers have declared to place Burke in the front rank of law reformers ?

It was ordered to be printed by the Commons, and was reprinted in the form of a pamphlet by Debrett, and sold at his shop in Piccadilly. It could not of course but be annoying to the partisans of Hastings, and especially to Lord Thurlow, whose mistakes on the woolsack it so completely exposed, and fully vindicated the course which Burke and the Managers of the impeachment had sought to follow. Thurlow was in a great rage. His scowls could not scowl down the Report ; the rolling thunders of his voice could not silence it ; his Olympian looks could not intimidate it ; neither could he and Mr. Counsellor Law, with their combined powers of dogmatism, self-sufficiency, and arrogance, answer it. It was a little beyond the scope of their abilities. Thurlow took a characteristic course. He could not refute it ; but he determined at least to rail at it. In the course of a debate on the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in the House of Lords on the twenty-second of May, he declared that a pamphlet, published by one Debrett, in Piccadilly, had been put into his hands, reflecting highly on the Judges and their Lordships. It was disgraceful and indecent. It ought to be punished. To vilify and misrepresent the conduct of judges and magistrates was a crime of a very heinous nature ; and by tending to teach the people to think ill of those who administered justice, could not but cause them to set at nought the laws of the country. Thurlow, in all his observations on the subject, spoke of the publication he censured, as the work of some obscure pamphleteer, classed it with the seditious writings of Paine and the Jacobin clubs, and said not a word by which it could be inferred that the publication he so

loudly denounced was really a Report of the House of Commons, against which not a single Member had ventured to raise his voice, and which had by that assembly been ordered to be printed.\*

Thurlow's speech was the next morning reported in the newspapers. Burke was not the man to allow such a slur to be indirectly passed upon a work on which he had spent so much labour, and the principles of which he was so anxious to see recognised. That evening he went down to the House of Commons, and, in a speech admirable for its spirit and dignity, immediately alluded to what occurred on the previous night in another place. Putting all the circumstances together, he could not doubt, he said, but that the harsh and unqualified censure pronounced by the lips of a learned Magistrate on a pamphlet, referred to a Report of that House. "That Report," said Burke, "was deliberately made, and does not, as I conceive, contain any material error, nor any undue nor indecent reflection upon any person or persons whatever. It does not accuse the Judges of ignorance or corruption. Whatever it says, it does not say calumniously. That kind of language belongs to persons whose eloquence entitles them to a free use of epithets. That Report states that the Judges had given their opinions secretly, contrary to the almost uninterrupted tenour of Parliamentary usage on such occasions. It states that the mode of giving the opinion was unprecedented, and contrary to the privileges of the House of Commons. It states that the Committee did not know upon what rules and principles the Judges had decided upon those cases, as they neither heard their opinions delivered, nor have found them entered upon the journals of the House of Lords. It is

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxxi. p. 588.

very true that we were and are extremely dissatisfied with those opinions, and the consequent determinations of the Lords ; and we do not think such a mode of proceeding at all justified by the most numerous and the best precedents. None of these sentiments is the Committee, as I conceive (and I feel as little as any of them), disposed to retract or to soften in the smallest degree. The Report speaks for itself. Whenever an occasion shall be regularly given to maintain everything of substance in that paper, I shall be ready to meet the proudest name for ability, learning, or rank, that this kingdom contains, upon that subject.\*

The House contained many friends of Hastings ; but this speech, as well as the Report itself, passed without any observation.

Five days later, Burke began his final labour on the impeachment. He spoke, in reply, on the evidence in a most elaborate speech, occupying nine days, beginning on Wednesday, the twenty-eighth of May, and concluding on Monday, the sixteenth of June. It was the last great oratorical effort of his life, and showed unmistakably that the powers which the first Pitt had so loudly praised when they were first displayed in the House of Commons twenty-eight years before, were still retained in undiminished vigour. Age had not chilled Burke's enthusiasm. His imagination, instead of being deadened, had only become more brilliant with increasing years ; and Milton's picture of "the old man eloquent" was never so thoroughly represented as by Burke, in this his closing effort in Westminster Hall. The Report on the Duration of the Trial, immediately followed by the great speech, or succession of speeches in reply, formed a wonderful con-

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iv. p. 291.

clusion to his fourteen years' exertions in the cause of India, and to the twenty-eight years of the most laborious Parliamentary career ever spent in the House of Commons.

The audience was far from being so numerous as when he began his opening speech in the February of 1788. The House of Commons, as a body, had almost ceased to attend. Even the Managers' box was almost deserted. Fox, Sheridan, Grey, and other members of the phalanx whom Burke had so deeply offended by the course he had taken on the French Revolution, were seldom present, and kept, as if designedly, away. Windham was however still, as at the beginning, Burke's faithful and affectionate attendant, assiduous to anticipate any of his wants, ready to read any paper, or do any service, however humble, for one whom he so much revered and loved. Francis too, though from a very different motive, was always present. How indeed could he be absent? Time had not in the smallest degree abated his animosity to Hastings; he was still eager to supply fuel to Burke's burning indignation against wrong and cruelty; and when the great orator was most vehement in his denunciations, and characterized Hastings's conduct by the strongest epithets, Francis delighted to watch the countenance of his old enemy at the bar, and gloat over the symptoms of suffering which even the accused Indian statesman, with his great powers of self-control, could not always conceal. Some of those epithets might indeed have been spared. Carried away by his feelings, the orator sometimes used language which many persons considered grossly abusive; and which, though frequently justified by the acts on which he commented, seemed violent and vindictive to those who thought that the prosecution even of a high official

accused of cruelty, corruption, and extortion, ought invariably to be conducted in the language of polite society.

This oration embraced the whole subject of the prosecution. It indeed gives a better idea of the question than the opening speech, which was of course more general, and not directly intended to criminate. In the absence of a full and authentic history of the impeachment, Burke's reply, as it has been published in his works with his corrections, from a copy of the shorthand writer's notes, is, as Dr. Laurence observed,\* the best and most comprehensive account of the whole subject-matter of this great trial; and no person can justly consider himself competent to pronounce a judgment on the question until he has carefully studied the full report of this nine days' speech. It is Burke's justification for his long and arduous efforts to convict Hastings; and a very complete justification it is. Nothing could be more admirable than, on referring to the general principles by which the conduct of a British governor ought to be judged, he repudiated the monstrous doctrine which Law and the rest of Hastings's counsel had set up, that because, forsooth, the natives of India had in all ages been subject to acts of tyranny and oppression from their rulers, an English statesman was also justified in exercising over them acts of tyranny and oppression. Again and again he demonstrated that even in India arbitrary power had been the exception, and not the rule; and that it was not competent for an English sovereign and an English Parliament to confer arbitrary power on any pro-consul whom they might send out to the East. This wise and humane doctrine has at length been completely recognized, both by Parliament and the Crown; and never

\* Laurence Correspondence, p. 48.

more distinctly or more impressively than in the noble proclamation in which Queen Victoria announced to all the populations of India, that they had come under her own immediate and benignant sovereignty. "My Lords," said Burke, "we acknowledge that Mr. Hastings was invested with discretionary power; but we assert that he was bound to use that power according to the established rules of political morality, humanity, and equity. In all questions relating to foreign powers, he was bound to act under the law of nature and under the law of nations, as it is recognized by the wisest authorities in public jurisprudence. In his relation to this country, he was bound to act according to the laws and statutes of Great Britain, either in their letter or in their spirit; and we affirm that in his relation to the people of India, he was bound to act according to the largest and most liberal construction of their laws, rights, usages, institutions, and good customs; and we furthermore assert that he was under an express obligation to yield implicit obedience to the Court of Directors. It is upon these rules and principles that Mr. Hastings ought to have regulated his government; and not only Mr. Hastings, but all other governors. It is upon these rules that he is responsible, and upon these rules, and these rules only, your Lordships are to judge." And on these principles the orator, again going over the ground which his brother Managers had trodden, shows that Hastings's conduct to Cheyt Sing at Benares, to the Begum in Oude, and in his dealings with Nobkissen and Larkins, were utterly unworthy of a British statesman.

Burke had lost none of his old energy and power. He also lost none of his vehemence. Even the knowledge that the great majority of the Peers were decidedly



opposed to the prosecution, and sure to acquit Hastings, did not diminish the orator's zeal. Day after day, and for more than four hours a day, he continued to speak with unabated eloquence and earnestness on the crimes which Hastings had committed, sometimes indulging in the most homely and almost indecorous comparisons; and at others, as a reporter who was anything but favourable to him observed, soaring to the heights of sublimity.\*

Though his defeat was inevitable, he fought the losing battle with as much spirit as if he was approaching a certain triumph. Hastings did not expect at the last moment this pertinacious and overwhelming recapitulation of his misdeeds: but conscious of the sympathies of his audience, he took liberties with his untiring prosecutor, such as at an earlier period of the trial he would not have ventured to display. While Burke was commenting on the treatment of the Begum, and blaming Hastings for disobedience to the Directors, who had ordered an inquiry into the charges of rebellion brought against her as a pretence for extorting money, Hastings suddenly rose from his seat at the bar, and flatly denied that any such order had been given. "Human nature," he added, "must at last be exhausted by such gross falsehoods so often repeated." Burke was quite taken aback at the interruption. He soon however began again, and said fiercely, "I hope the Court will not permit that wicked wretch, that scourge of India, that criminal, to insult the House of Commons." Hastings, the orator declared, ought for such conduct to be sent to Bridewell. Windham, coming to Burke's assistance, said that it would be best to refer to the letters of the Directors, to see how the facts really were. He found that though there were no ex-

\* Trial of Warren Hastings, by Debrett, p. 143.

press orders given for such an inquiry, Hastings was requested to institute one. Hastings and his friend considered this a victory, and that Burke's statements had been signally refuted by evidence; but there does not seem any such mighty difference between an order and a request, sent out by the Directors to their servant in the East. A request from a Government to its agents abroad, is generally considered quite equivalent to a command; and it is certain that in the case to which Burke alluded, the command or request, whichever it might be, was totally disregarded. Hastings was scarcely justified in speaking of such a trifling inaccuracy in a phrase, as "a gross falsehood."

But neither Hastings, his friends, nor his leading counsel had that respect for Burke, which it would have been only becoming in them to have shown. They could not see that he had any impelling motive higher than the lowest self-interest: they never admitted for one moment, either to themselves or to any one else, that a man could work for fourteen years from the mere patriotic duty of bringing a great public criminal to justice. Major Scott has been laughed at, and his ability to conduct the defence of Hastings in the House of Commons estimated by his calling "the greatest man then living, 'That reptile Mr. Burke.'"<sup>\*</sup> But in justice to the Major, it must be admitted that there were other men who had quite as poor an appreciation of his great prosecutor: Hastings's principal legal defender in Westminster Hall had exactly the same opinion in the matter as his champion in the House of Commons. Mr. Counsellor Law, who became an eminent Chief Justice, and as the first Lord Ellenborough, the founder of a patrician family, agreed ex-

\* Macaulay, in his Essay on Warren Hastings.

actly with the Major's estimate of Burke, and even spared a few leisure moments from his legal labours to embody the sentiment about the reptile in an epigram remarkable for taste and genius. In the last day of his reply, Monday the sixteenth of June, Burke began his speech by quoting this sublime production; and it is only an act of justice to Mr. Counsellor Law, to preserve it in all its original perfection and beauty.

“Oft have I wondered that on Irish ground  
No poisonous reptiles ever yet were found;  
Revealed the secret stands of nature's work,  
She saved her venom to create a Burke.”

This concluding day of the reply, when Burke quoted this epigram on himself, was a memorable one in English oratory. After speaking for nearly two hours, and with great effect, on Lord Cornwallis's evidence, on Dundas's fifty-five criminatory resolutions, and on the Mahratta war, Burke said that he had come to his conclusion, and would only detain their Lordships for a few minutes more. He paused solemnly; and then began a peroration, which, as a very unfriendly reporter admitted, “for beauty, energy, and simplicity, was never exceeded, if indeed equalled.” On being read in the complete report of the speech, afterwards posthumously published, it fully justifies this encomium. In the language there is nothing more simple, impressive, and noble. He solemnly reminded the assembled peers of England how the Parliament of Paris had fallen, and how essential it was for the most elevated court of justice, in such a time, to pronounce a righteous judgment. “Your Lordships' House still stands,” said he, “but it stands amid ruins.” He drew a picture of the state of France, which at that time

\* ‘Trial of Warren Hastings,’ by Debrett, p. 143.

had reached its climax of horror, as the quarrel between Robespierre and the Convention was gradually approaching the deadly issue, after the hideous decree of the twenty-second Prairial, when the daily number of victims carried by the tumbrils to the guillotine was rising to sixty, and Fouquier Tinville was contemplating still more extensive and expeditious means of wholesale slaughter: and the great orator impressively reminded the nobles of England, that at a time when rank and dignities were bending under the storm around them, it became even that august tribunal to look to its foundations, and fortify itself by inflicting deserved punishment on tyranny, and affording protection to the oppressed and suffering nations who prayed for justice. There was something which existed before Creation itself, and would exist when the globe had passed away. This was eternal justice. It was the attribute of the great God of Nature before worlds were; it would reside with Him when they had perished; and the earthly portion of it committed to their Lordships' care, was now deposited in their hand by the Commons of England. "My Lords," said Burke, "I have done."

Parliament was about to be adjourned. The business was left in their Lordships' hands; and it soon appeared that a delay of months might probably occur, before they could pronounce judgment on the four different heads of charges into which the original twenty articles had merged. The functions of the managers of the House of Commons had, however, ceased with Burke's final reply. His occupation was gone; and though he might reasonably have remained in Parliament until the judgment had been given, he determined to lose no time in carrying out the resolution he had long formed. When he hinted about

retiring from Parliament as soon as his duties of manager for the Impeachment were performed, Sheridan and the phalanx were accustomed to smile incredulously. They would have it that he had very different views. It would be soon seen how far their estimate of his character was correct.

On the twentieth of June, Pitt moved a vote of thanks to the managers of the impeachment. He went into the different objections that had been made by Hastings's friends in the course of the trial, and declared that the Report which Burke laid on the table, fully proved any delay really to have arisen from the conduct of Hastings and his counsel, who continually cavilled and objected to evidence, and endeavoured to get it suppressed. But this fact alone, he said, was a strong presumption that such evidence had not been irrelevant to the charges. In one sentence Pitt condensed the whole moral of the impeachment, and amply justified Burke's motives during the fourteen years' labour he had spent in this arduous business. "The impeachment itself," observed Pitt, "was voted not only under the conviction of the guilt of the person impeached, but as a terror to those placed in similar situations in the government of our distant provinces; and whatever the ultimate decision may be, I am confident that the example of Mr. Hastings will deter other gentlemen from a repetition of the practices that marked his administration." The Minister concluded by expressing his hope that the vote of thanks would be passed unanimously, and warned Hastings's friends, who had intimated an intention of opposing it, that a unanimous vote, however honourable to the objects of it, might not be so honourable as one distinguished by the discriminating negative of those who felt themselves wounded and

irritated by the conscientious and admirable discharge of a task, which the House and the country had imposed.\*

But Hastings's friends, annoyed by the adroit defence of the impeachment made by the Minister, would not take his warning. They moved the previous question; and invidiously singled out Burke for attack. They did not, as one of them declared, object so much to a vote of thanks at a proper time to the rest of the managers; but Burke had gone out of his way to apply the strongest and most disgraceful epithets to Hastings, especially in the recent reply, and they would not cover such conduct with the approbation of the House of Commons. He had even, asserted Mr. Ewart Law, an Anglo-Indian, who had shared the Governor-General's patronage, and was enthusiastic on his merits, described Hastings as a man of low, vulgar, and obscure origin; "and," said this polite nabob, "that from such a man as the manager a word should be uttered on the subject of low, mean, and obscure origin, was indeed most extraordinary. The manager, of all men living, ought to have avoided such a topic." Had the opposition to the vote been directed against the whole Committee of Management, Burke's associates in the impeachment could scarcely have interposed. But seeing the invidious nature of the attack, they made common cause with him, and came forward manfully in his defence. The Indian clique persisted however in dividing the House. The motion for the previous question was supported by a minority of twenty-one; Pitt himself was one of the tellers for the majority of fifty-five. The vote of thanks was then put and carried; the same minority of twenty-one voting in the negative, and fifty members in the affirmative.

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxxi. pp. 936-40.

The Managers then, as the rule is on such occasions, stood up in their places. Addington, the Speaker, in a brief, but dignified and appropriate speech, conveyed to them the thanks of the House. He too, as Pitt had previously done, emphatically pointed out the real significance of the impeachment, whatever might be the judgment of the Lords; though hasty and superficial persons, judging merely from that verdict, have thoughtlessly considered the prosecution as a laborious work of supererogation, if not of positive injustice. "The subject to which your attention has been engaged," said the Speaker, "was intricate and extensive beyond example. You have proved that it was well suited to your industry and eloquence, the exertions of which have conferred honour, not only on yourselves, but on this House, whose credit is intimately connected with your own. A forcible admonition has been given on this occasion, to all persons in situations of national trust, that they can neither be removed by distance, nor sheltered by power, from the vigilance and authority of this House, which is possessed of no privilege more important than that by which it is enabled to bring public delinquents to the bar of public justice, and thus to preserve or rescue from dishonour the British name and character."\*

This was heard by Burke with deep emotion. It indicated clearly the philanthropic object he had had so long in view, and for which he had undergone so much labour, and incurred so much obloquy. Pitt moved that the Speaker should be requested to print the speech he had just made. Burke then took the opportunity of making a few grave and final observations. He expressed the satisfaction of himself and his brother mana-

\* Parl. Hist., vol. xxxi. p. 953.

gers, at receiving, after they had completed their work, the thanks of the House, and also at the very becoming manner in which they had been communicated to them by the Speaker. He briefly defended his own conduct, but without any bitterness; making no remark on the rude personalities with which he had, even on that day, been assailed, and only saying that he did not complain of the prejudices which rose from personal friendship or from a sense of personal obligation. He disclaimed throwing out any imputations on the Company's servants in general; and in regard to what he had said of the conduct of the troops serving in Oude, he declared that he had only repeated the language of the House itself. "As for the other expressions," he said, "they have been very much misrepresented."\*

These were the last words that Burke ever spoke in the House of Commons. He quietly left the House that evening, and never appeared in it again. His parliamentary work, as he considered, was done, and without any delay, he applied for, and accepted the Chiltern Hundreds. He was a poor man when, full of youth, strength, health, knowledge, genius, and ambition, he entered the House of Commons more than twenty-eight years before; he was still a poor man, and so far as official emolument was concerned, not a penny richer, without public reward, place, pension, or sinecure, on leaving it at the close of the session in July, 1794.

The time of his retirement was remarkable. The union he had so long endeavoured to bring about between the old Whigs and the Ministry was, almost unknown to himself, at length settled. This July, his friends, the Duke of Portland, Lord Fitzwilliam, Earl Spencer, and Wind-

\* Collected Speeches, vol. iv. p. 292.



ham, at last accepted office; and there can be no doubt that some high appointment would have been gladly conferred upon himself, or any other lucrative honour for which, had he been an interested man, he might have been disposed to negotiate. But he neither desired nor accepted anything. Satisfied with seeing his friends co-operating with the Government in this most anxious season of public affairs, and smoothing any difficulty which arose when the arrangement was completed, for himself he asked nothing. Some little opening was at last to be afforded for his son to enter public life in an authorized public situation, and this was all that Burke appears to have cared or thought about.

Even this, little as it was, was more a matter of private arrangement and personal attachment than one affecting the Government in general. It was settled with Lord Fitzwilliam that Richard Burke should succeed his father in the representation of Malton, the old Yorkshire borough for which he had sat ever since his defeat for Bristol. It had been Lord Rockingham's; it was now Lord Fitzwilliam's; and with it the Government had nothing whatever to do. The only thing in which any preference was shown, so far as concerned the patronage of Government, was in a subsequent arrangement, by which it was understood that Lord Fitzwilliam, temporarily accepting the office of President of the Council, was in a few months to succeed the Earl of Westmoreland as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and that Richard Burke was to accompany him as Chief Secretary. This was surely no very great stretch of Ministerial favour. The appointment, even merely on public grounds, was a most judicious one. The Government had in some measure consented to follow, with respect to Ireland, the policy Burke

had long advised; and it was understood that Lord Fitzwilliam would cross St. George's Channel, pledged to conciliate, in this time of war, the Roman Catholics, and himself as viceroy take the lead in redressing their grievances. Under these circumstances, it was necessary that the Chief Secretary should possess their confidence; and who could be found better fitted for the office than Richard Burke, whom they had voluntarily appointed their agent, who knew Ireland well, and had already gone through an arduous probation on that scene of his duties?

Burke went with his son into Yorkshire, and introduced him to his old friends, Lord Rockingham's tenants and his future constituents. They spent a few days at Wentworth House. All the scenes associated in the statesman's mind with the memory of Lord Rockingham were revisited. The election passed off most pleasantly. There was much merry-making during the long days of a fine July. Burke saw his son returned member for Malton; and in communicating the fact of his election to his cousin, the recently married Mrs. Thomas Haviland, Richard rejoiced in writing his first frank. Happy son! happier father!

They returned to London. Burke was in unusual health and spirits. During the whole session, since his brother's death, he had been observed to be melancholy and depressed; but it was remarked that the journey into Yorkshire, and the gratification attending Richard's election, had quite restored him, and that he looked younger and less careworn than he had done for many months.

A number of friends were invited to a dinner-party at his house in Duke-street, St. James's, to celebrate Ri-

chard's return for Malton, and the beginning of his official life as Secretary for Ireland. Burke's face was radiant. Nothing ever could occur more agreeable to his feelings. To see his son his chosen successor in that House, whose debates he had so long enriched and adorned, and to see him begin a ministerial career under Lord Rockingham's heir and representative, Lord Fitzwilliam was in the highest degree delightful. But this was not all. He was going to Ireland in that very office of Chief Secretary, which William Gerard Hamilton had filled, when Burke, himself then a young man, had accompanied him to Ireland, begun his work against the Penal Laws, and first entertained the high ambition of emancipating the majority of his countrymen from the iron yoke under which they had long been so cruelly and remorselessly oppressed. Richard was going to Ireland on this very mission. He was going to Ireland, armed with all the authority of Government, to devise, in co-operation with the most enlightened patriots, the best means of carrying out the principles of religious toleration, of drawing closer the bonds of union between the two countries, and in this season of revolution, of circumventing the democratic agitators, by connecting, through the medium of their affections, the Roman Catholics to the British Crown. What the father had so long desired was at last then about to come to pass. Ireland was to be united to England on honourable terms ; her chains were to be broken ; and his son, the darling object of all his hopes, of all his prayers, was, under his teachings and inspirations, to be the chosen instrument of accomplishing this noble work. What honour could be compared with this ? What blessing could the kind heavens shower down upon a father's head more benignant than

that of seeing his dearest and most patriotic desires carried out by his only child? It was something to have lived and struggled for through so many long years. Pass round the wine-cup! Drink with full honours to Richard Burke, the new member for Malton, and the new Chief Secretary for Ireland! It is no dream. The father's eyes glisten. He was all happiness and joy. But alas! there were some guests and at that table who could not but entertain dark forebodings as they contrasted the bright picture of future prosperity and usefulness Burke drew for his offspring, with Richard's emaciated features, hectic flush, and hacking cough, which had grown worse since the last winter, and even in that hour of gaiety and exhilaration could not be suppressed. Those true friends, Dr. Brocklesby the good physician, and Dr. Laurence the good civilian, had for months entertained suspicions that all was not well. They communicated their sad thoughts to each other, and went home that evening alarmed for the son, but much more alarmed for the father. Death was present at the board.

The next day Richard felt really ill. He was not accustomed to complain; but his chest was painful, and he had vomited blood. Dr. Brocklesby was sent for. He knew not what to say, and durst not declare his serious apprehensions, but recommended a change of air. Richard consented to leave town; but not to go very far away. Had he not business to transact? Had he not soon to set out for Ireland, and was it not necessary that he should be in the way, that no time might be lost? So thought the son; so thought the father. Lodgings were taken at Cromwell House, an isolated villa, then almost a country residence, near Old Brompton. It was plea-

santly situated, with a large garden in front, and sheltered by trees. Thither Burke and his wife retired, with the suffering Richard.

The change did him no good. He rapidly grew worse. Dr. Brocklesby and other physicians attended him daily ; they saw that he was in a decline, but at first, supposing that he might linger for months, they thought it better not to tell Burke the serious nature of the indisposition, because Dr. Brocklesby, who knew how much all his hopes and life were centred in his son, feared that if he were acquainted with the fact, he would probably be the first to die. But on Saturday, the twenty-fifth of July, the fatal malady had made such alarming progress that the medical advisers had no choice but to inform Burke of Richard's danger. Notwithstanding that the symptoms of consumption had been so apparent to others, neither Burke nor his wife appears to have had the slightest suspicion of the truth.

The shock was terrible. Even the physicians themselves were not aware that death was so imminent ; but Burke at once almost abandoned every hope. He ate no food ; he took no rest ; his affliction was truly dreadful. His was that agonizing grief which could not be comforted. In Paris, during those last days of July, the struggle between Robespierre and the Convention was one of life or death. Blood flowed still more copiously than ever. Insurrection was again in the streets ; Robespierre and his friends were declared out of law ; and, with his jaw broken from a pistol-shot, and almost stupefied, he too, with St. Just, Couthon, and others, were borne in tumbrils to meet their righteous fate on that guillotine to which they had sent so many noble and illustrious victims. The summer sun shone upon the scene of blood ;

at night the stars looked down placidly, while the same sky overarched the murderous Jacobins, both conquerors and conquered, and the dying invalid at Cromwell House, and his heartbroken father, by whom this French Revolution had long been so intently watched. During this sad week the newspapers were unread ; all political speculation was abandoned ; in the presence of the one great private sorrow, all other human things lost their interest.

The physicians told him not to despair. The danger, they admitted, was serious ; but the substance of the lungs not being yet affected, the invalid might not be in any immediate danger. The father had however a presentiment that Richard's death was much nearer than he was told to expect ; and the event showed that he judged more correctly than his medical informants. Mrs. Burke tried to bear up against her grief in order to sustain her husband ; but the spectacle they both exhibited was so distressing, that the kind-hearted Dr. Brocklesby declared that, accustomed as he was to such scenes, it was almost too much for him. On Thursday, the last day of July, the father wrote to Dr. Laurence, concluding abruptly with the characteristic and pathetic exclamation, " Oh ! my brother died in time."

Another hurried note from Burke to the same friend, at this time, brings the scene in the sick-room at Cromwell House vividly before us : the medical men seeking to quiet Burke's immediate apprehensions, himself trying to hope against hope, the poor invalid gradually sinking, and his mother praying that his life might yet be spared. " Things are bad enough," he wrote ; " but the doctors bid me not think them desperate. His stomach is continually on the turn ; nothing rests on it, owing to the

irritation caused by the inflammation of the trachea towards the bottom. The fever continues much as it was ; he sleeps in a very uneasy way from time to time ; but his strength decays visibly, and his voice is in a manner gone. But God is all-sufficient ; and surely His goodness and his mother's prayers may do much. As to me, I feel myself dried up."\*

Richard was observed to be very restless and uneasy on the Friday night. On the Saturday morning, the second of August, his lips were black ; but his voice seemed much stronger ; and he could take asses' milk without vomiting it up again, as he had done everything that had been offered to him since the preceding Monday. The symptoms were favourable ; but they gave Burke and his wife no comfort. Might they not be the delusive appearances of health which in such cases frequently herald the approach of death ? His father and mother's heartrending cries reached the chamber where the poor invalid was lying. He rose from his bed, changed his linen, carefully washed and dressed himself, and requested Mr. and Mrs. West, the butler and housekeeper, who had lived with the family for more than twenty years, and had grown old in the service, to support him downstairs to the room where he thought his father and mother were weeping and praying together. When he entered, however, Burke was alone. To show that he was better, Richard summoned all his remaining strength, and walked across to the window, "treading firmly, as you will remember," said Dr. Laurence, "was his usual mode of walking."\* He remained a little while, and then, assisted by his father, again returned to his chamber, and laid himself upon the bed. Burke was himself speechless

\* Laurence Correspondence, p. 30.

with grief. Richard tried in vain to draw him into conversation ; and then began to speak of himself and his illness. He felt better ; but he had singular sensations. His spirits were lighter ; and yet he was disturbed, he did not know by what. Something strange was surely approaching. "Why, Sir," he said to Burke, "do you not chide me for these unmanly feelings? I am under no terror ; I feel myself better and in spirits, yet my heart flutters, I know not why. Pray talk to me, Sir. Talk of religion ; talk of morality ; talk, if you will, on indifferent subjects." His sense of hearing was painfully acute. He seemed listening for that something which was coming. "What noise is that?" he asked ; "is it rain?"—"No!" replied his heartbroken father, "it is the wind rustling through the trees." Richard then, sitting up in the bed, repeated with all the grace of elocution and action three verses from Adam's morning hymn, in Milton. They were familiar to the whole family, being favourite lines of himself, his father, and his uncle, whom he had so recently followed to the grave :—

"His praise, ye winds, that from four quarters blow,  
Breathe soft or loud ; and wave your tops, ye pines,  
With every plant, in sign of worship, wave."

He repeated them once more, with the same beautiful delivery and appropriate gestures, each time waving his head, as if in worship. As he finished the second time, he sank down in the arms of his father and mother, who clung around him. Mrs. Burke was prevailed upon to leave the room. A few minutes afterwards Dr. King

\* Dr. Laurence's letters to Mrs. Salisbury Haviland, the mother of Captain Haviland, contain the most authentic account of Richard's death. Some of them were, I believe, first published by Mr. Prior. See the last edition of his *Life of Burke*, pp. 397–404.



came out, and told her that her son was no more. He had expired in Burke's arms.

Thus Richard Burke died. His character has ever since remained a subject of controversy, or, perhaps, of pretty general depreciation. His name is rarely mentioned without some remark on his father's infatuation of investing his offspring with the highest attributes of virtue and genius. It was his fate in life to be neglected and underrated, and the same fortune has attended his memory. Those who had studiously depressed him while living, sought afterwards to justify their conduct by speaking contemptuously of his abilities. Men, however, very much his inferiors, had been promoted, through their connections, to the highest offices. Mr. Pitt, for instance, in this time of war could make his brother, the Earl of Chatham, First Lord of the Admiralty, and after his signal failure in that employment, gave him other opportunities of displaying his extreme incapacity in the most important military commands; while Richard Burke, until the last month of his life, had had no fair occasion offered him of distinguishing himself at all. He had been trained for the public service; and yet from that service he had long been studiously excluded. It was not without reason that, as his father afterwards admitted, he sometimes felt dispirited at the efforts made to keep him down.\*

Burke's parental partiality, if partiality it was, might be excused. It certainly was not so absurd as it has sometimes been represented. There were other persons who thought almost as much of Richard as even his father did; and those who knew him best appreciated him the most highly. None had better opportunities of

\* Letter to William Elliott, Esq.

knowing him than the brothers King, one of whom had been his companion in 1773 at Auxerre; and the other, Dr. Walker King, afterwards Bishop of Rochester, had been his friend from their school-days. A few days after Richard's death, this gentleman wrote a discriminating and able sketch of the deceased's character for the newspapers; and, in this friendly tribute, his opinion respecting his lost friend's intellectual powers was not exceeded by that of Richard's father himself. "His talents, whether for business or speculation," said Dr. King, "were not exceeded by any which the present, or perhaps any former, age could boast. In that share, unfortunately small, which fell to his lot in public affairs, the superior abilities which he manifested were acknowledged by the first characters in public life. Perhaps it was owing to their magnitude and solidity, disproportioned to the currency of the times, that they remained without further employment." Grattan was always accustomed to express himself in terms of admiration of Richard's abilities, and declared that they never were estimated at their proper value. It is not easy, of course, to prove a negative. Richard had had few opportunities of showing what his abilities really were, and it therefore became usual to say, after he was gone, that he had no abilities at all. He died at thirty-six: that is, he died, as his father said of General Wolfe, "at the age when most men are only beginning to appear;" and had Burke himself died at such an age, he would not have had credit for anything like the powers he possessed. Richard's talents were not of the flashy kind. His attainments were great; and everything about him, except his physical constitution, was solid and durable. His letters, the observations he made on political affairs, the sentences he inserted in his

father's writings on the French Revolution, unquestionably indicate talents very far beyond mediocrity. It may be doubted whether either Pitt or Fox could have written better on the Irish Catholic question in 1791 and 1792, than did the slighted Richard Burke. His views were certainly quite as statesmanlike and quite as far-sighted as theirs.

Many people, however, neglecting such evidence, have derived their notion of Richard Burke from an anecdote which Sir Walter Scott assisted to give currency. On the authority of Lord Sidmouth, Sir Walter recorded in his diary that, "On moving some resolutions in favour of the Catholics, which were ill received by the House of Commons, young Burke *actually ran away*; which an Orangeman compared to a cross-reading in the newspapers: Yesterday the Catholic resolutions were, etc., but the pistols missing fire the villains ran off."\* The statement has been allowed to pass unchallenged, ever since Mr. Lockhart published his valuable biography of the most illustrious of Scottish writers, and one of the bravest and best of men. It is a fair specimen of the genus anecdote, told over a dinner-table, and afterwards industriously recorded as coming from high authority, for the instruction of future generations. Lord Sidmouth, who had been for so many years Speaker of the House of Commons, might have been expected to know as well as any one what passed there during the time of his Speakership. But it is certain that Richard Burke never moved a petition in the House of Commons; and that he never ran away while presenting such a petition; and for a very good and sufficient reason: he never sat in the House of Commons at all. He did not return to London

\* Lockhart's Life of Scott, p. 685, edit. 1845.

in the July of 1794, on his election for Malton, until after the prorogation of Parliament: he was immediately afterwards taken ill, and died, without ever having had the opportunity of bringing forward a motion, presenting a petition, making a speech, or even taking the oaths. Neither did he ever sit in the Irish House of Commons. The amusing incident of him getting up to move a petition, and on being frightened at the opposition it met with, literally running away, could never by any possibility have occurred. But such anecdotes, even when untrue, are seldom pure inventions. I have no doubt that the foundation on which such a witty superstructure became based was the fact related in a preceding page, of Richard, when agent for the Catholic Association, having, in his ardour to correct a member who did move a petition for their relief, overstepped the threshold of the House, and on being assailed by the turbulent majority on College Green with cries of 'Stranger!' and 'Take him into custody,' found out his mistake, and made his exit as quickly as possible to the entrance through the door, where he remained until the House broke up.\* But this is a very different thing from a Member of the House running away. It was only doing what every stranger who had unintentionally committed the same error would in the same circumstances immediately have done; and proves nothing against the extent of Richard's intellectual powers, or the vigour of his nervous system, though it was related by Lord Sidmouth, and recorded by Scott, to show how strange was Burke's "hallucination" about his son's being a man of talent, and that Richard was after all "a man of little talent and no nerve."†

\* See ante, p. 468.

† Lord Sidmouth in his old age appears to have been much of an

Richard was not easily understood. There was nothing ostentatious about him ; he was in no hurry to push himself forward. Only two or three companions from childhood, and the members of his own family, knew his real character. He had much of his father's philanthropic generosity ; was always ready to do good by stealth ; and only did not blush for it because the fame of his goodness was never known to the world. As his letters show him in his youth privately sending all his pocket-money to his father's poor relations on the Blackwater, and telling them that they need not mention to Burke what he had done ; so at Beaconsfield, among the poor of the neighbourhood, he was equally and as secretly kind. Out of his little he would give his all. On his death many persons lost their best friend. Incapable of yielding to temptation himself, his counsels and his purse were sedulously at the service of the unfortunate and the imprudent. Though he died so young, he had lived long enough to save others from ruin ; and in virtue, if not in genius, was undoubtedly his father's son.

Quiet, reserved, gentle, studiously polite and well-bred, he appears in his relation to his friends and family to have come as near perfection as human nature will allow.

Richard's portrait, by his friend Sir Joshua Reynolds, reflects all the amiable features of his character. It is anecdote-monger : but either through defect of memory or other causes his stories are not always trustworthy. I will give another instance of his inaccuracy. He must have been in the chair when the dagger scene occurred ; and yet he says that Burke startled the House by throwing the weapon down unexpectedly, with only "a few preliminary observations." It is certain however that he did not throw it down until just at the close of a long and argumentative oration on the Alien Bill. Compare *Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxx. p. 180-9, with *Lord Sidmouth's Life*, vol. i. p. 97.

one of the masterpieces of the great artist's genius, being, as all who knew Richard declared, as perfect a picture of the original as it was possible to delineate on canvas. Some of the portraits which Sir Joshua painted of the members of the Burke family, and particularly those of Burke himself, have unfortunately, like other pictures of the great English master, already begun to fade. But the picture of Richard retains all its exquisite perfection. It is life itself. Even the ordinary spectator of a picture gallery, knowing nothing of Richard Burke, or of the sad history with which his name is associated, cannot but, on beholding the portrait, feel irresistibly attracted to that beautiful face, with its delicate, refined, and earnest expression.\* So consummately truthful is this display of Sir Joshua's skill, that amid all the freshness of colour and youth, the hectic flush, that symptom of the fatal disease to which Richard became the prey, is unmistakably delineated on the cheek, and is in vivid contrast with the rest of that sweet face which looks so surpassingly fair. Not every day do we look on such a picture. Not every day do we behold such a face. On gazing at it admiringly and mournfully we feel the sad truth illustrated more than two thousand years ago in the noble fable related by Herodotus, and sternly impressed by an experience of the sorrows of human life :

“Those whom the gods love die young.”

\* Of this I can speak from experience. The picture, with one of Burke himself and another of his kinsman William, was lately on view at the British Institution in Pall Mall; and while standing near it I was surprised to observe the effect it had on the casual passers-by. “Whose picture is that?” was the question frequently asked; and few visitors of either sex there were who could refrain from looking at it attentively and long. It is now the property of the Hon. G. Fitzwilliam, at Milton.

Assuredly the fate of Richard was mercy itself in comparison with that of his father, whose duty it was on that miserable Saturday morning to close for ever his darling's eyes. Burke's grief was terrible. He burst forth with loud cries ; rushed violently into the room where the corpse was lying, and again and again flung himself upon the bed in the most heart-rending affliction. His poor wife too suffered equally, though her grief was not so demonstrative. For a full hour after Richard was no more, she rubbed him with vinegar, and then tried other simple means to restore him to life. At last their friends were obliged, on the Saturday night, to request them to promise not to go any more into the room where their dead son was lying. The promise was reluctantly given ; they soon afterwards regretted having made it ; still it was faithfully kept. Then Burke became distressed by a new agony. His last sight of Richard was when the eyes were closed, and the face appeared to sleep the placid sleep of death ; and this image had made such an impression upon him, that he declared, crying loudly, he could not again picture to his mind the features and air of his living Richard. His grief was renewed on his first interview with any of his old friends after the dreadful loss. Burke and his wife passed a fortnight at Cromwell House, after Richard's death, Mrs. Burke steadily refusing to leave while her son's remains were there, and afterwards lingering through a very natural reluctance to set out for Beaconsfield, where every object would remind them of him who had been taken away for ever. The last frank that poor Richard wrote with a trembling hand was on the cover of a letter summoning William Burke, who was absent, to the death-bed at Cromwell House. The fatal event occurred before he

arrived ; and then, "weeping like a child," he could not bear an interview with his cousins, but went down to Beaconsfield to prepare for their reception. Burke and his wife were left, as they best could, to comfort and console each other, and the efforts they made under their affliction affected all who came near them. Mrs. Burke was obliged to take a mild opiate every evening before retiring to rest. For days their dinner hour was unregarded ; life with the two mourners seemed suspended ; nights and days were spent in unavailing sorrow.

Dr. Laurence pathetically related to Mrs. Salisbury Haviland the circumstance of an interview with Burke and his wife some days after Richard's death. "After the first meeting," he said, "she was more composed than he, or she played her part more naturally in order not to discompose him. When I separated from her arms he took me by the hand and spoke to me with a tone of artificial and laborious fortitude ; she saw through the disguise and gently reproved him for not supporting himself as he promised. She entered occasionally with apparent sincerity into some of the topics of consolation upon which I touched a little, whenever any expressions of his seemed to render them necessary ; and occasionally she took part in the general topics of conversation which were introduced. But once when he had walked to the other end of the room, and once when he was reading to himself, she raised her hands and cast upward at the same time a piteous look of silent affliction." How sad this reads ! And Burke was so soon to follow his son, and the widow to be left to mourn for them both alone ! Oh, parents and children ! oh, life and death !

Burke's grief gradually became less violent in its manifestations : but the change was scarcely for the better.



Henceforth a settled melancholy took possession of his mind ; it continued with him during the short time he yet remained upon the earth ; the gloom was only occasionally relieved when he discussed in his writings and letters the political affairs of the time, which, however dark and perplexing, by calling forth Burke's energy, momentarily dispelled the clouds which overshadowed his mighty intellect. Those who knew him best predicted that he would not long survive the loss he had sustained. Though he had certainly reached his sixty-fifth year, and was probably at least a year older, notwithstanding the many years of severe public labour he had undergone, his health might up to this time be considered good, if not robust. From almost the beginning of his public life, he had scarcely had any indisposition which a few days' relaxation at Beaconsfield did not immediately remedy. On returning from Yorkshire he had, as we have seen, appeared to have taken a new lease of life. But the fortnight's sorrow after Richard's death had left such ravages on Burke's frame as appalled all who saw him for the first time after his great affliction. He seemed suddenly to have become old and infirm ; his eyes were sunken ; his step unsteady ; his chest bowed down. He spoke of himself as one dead. The ties that connected him with life were sundered. From the day of Richard's death Burke might be considered to have at least one foot in the grave ; and to count impatiently the hours during which he had yet to be numbered with the living.

His only comfort was to carry out any wishes that his son had expressed before he was summoned away. Richard had left a short list of those friends to whom he wished to be remembered, and they became to Burke

objects of devotion. To assist them in any way was to him the most sacred of duties.

On the eleventh of August, some days before he left Cromwell House, he wrote out a will with his own hands. It was the first he had ever made; but he thought that he had nothing to do but to prepare to die. Heartbroken as he was, his eloquence returned to him as soon as he took up his pen to perform even the sad office. This will, the only one Burke left, and written while he was prostrate with grief, is a beautiful piece of composition. Few can read the first sentence of the mournful document without emotion: "If my dear son and friend had survived me, any will would have been unnecessary; but since it has pleased God to call him to himself before his father, my duty calls upon me to make such a distribution of my worldly effects as seems, to my best judgment, most equitable and reasonable. Therefore I, Edmund Burke, late of the parish of St. James, Westminster, though suffering under sore and inexpressible affliction, being of sound and disposing mind, do make my last will and testament in manner following: First, according to the ancient good and laudable custom, of which my heart and understanding recognize the propriety, I bequeath my soul to God, hoping for his mercy through the only merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. My body I desire, if I should die in any place very convenient for its transport thither (but not otherwise), to be buried in the church at Beaconsfield, near to the bodies of my dearest brother and my dearest son, in all humility praying that, as we have lived in perfect unity together, we may together have a part in the resurrection of the just." Forty-four years before, when he first, as a young student of the Temple, surveyed the monuments in West-

minster Abbey, he had declared his preference for a family burying-ground in a quiet country churchyard. We see the feeling quite as strongly displayed in this last testament of his old age, when he too, after a life of renown, had a most indisputable claim to a resting-place in the national mausoleum.

His funeral was to be of the simplest kind; the expense not to exceed that of his brother. "I have had," he said, "in my lifetime too much of noise and compliment." Mrs. Burke and his lost son had for years managed his pecuniary affairs, even when in a state of great derangement and embarrassment: how much he might have to leave, he did not then know: for "my debts when I write this are very great." But whatever he had to leave, he bequeathed completely and unconditionally "to my entirely beloved and incomparable wife, Jane Mary Burke." She was to be the sole executrix, acting under the advice of his friends, Dr. Laurence and Dr. Walker King. His kinsman William is spoken of as his old friend and faithful companion, whose place in his heart he well knew. "I do not, however," wrote Burke, "mention him as executor or assistant. I know he will attend to my wife; but I choose the two I have mentioned, as, from their time of life, of greater activity." But the real reason why William Burke was not appointed executor or adviser to Mrs. Burke was, though it could not of course be stated in the will, that his health was completely broken. He had returned from India an invalid, and was in fact the mere shadow of his former self. Any day he might drop into the grave. Subject to his wife's discretion, a thousand pounds, or a legacy equivalent to it, is left to his niece, Mary Haviland. Lord Fitzwilliam, the Duke of Portland, the Lord Cavendish, with the head of

that family, the Duke of Devonshire, are mentioned by name as his friends, while to them, those mentioned in his son's list, and others which Burke put down in a list of his own, are to be sent "the usual remembrance of little mourning rings." He contemplated his end with satisfaction: "after what has happened," he tells his wife to see his death with constancy and resignation. The will was signed, as witnesses, by his old servant William Webster, by Dr. Walker King, and by M. Dupont, the translator of *The Reflections*, who at the time of the calamity was in England.

This duty having been performed, a still harder trial awaited Burke. He was to set out for Beaconsfield. He was to look once more on every object which for twenty-six years had been associated with Richard, on the house and lands which he had hoped to leave to him as the heir and representative of the family and name, and which, with this object in view, it had been his constant delight to alter and improve. He had to look on the very church within which poor Richard's remains were lying. As Burke approached the little town he was quite overcome. He could not pass by that old church, but turned his horses round, and went by a back road to his own desolate dwelling. This little country church, so suggestive and so pleasing, became to him an object of horror. He could never from that time bear to enter it, to come near it, or even to behold in the distance the grotesque wooden steeple which had been put up under his immediate superintendence. The books which Richard had studied, the rooms he had occupied, and which for him had been, at much expense, enlarged and furnished with every luxurious comfort, the horse which he had been accustomed to ride, and which stood in the stable with-

out a master, all smote by the great law of association deeply on the afflicted father's heart. Some of Richard's things had been hastily removed by William from the hall and dining parlour before Burke arrived ; but even the very vacancy which their absence created had almost as bad an effect on his mind as the presence of such objects could have produced. Richard's horse was, by Burke's orders, let loose in the paddock ; no person was to ride it again ; it was to roam while it lived unmolested in the richest pasture of the grounds, knowing no other master.

All was very sad. But perhaps not the least sad of circumstances attending the great loss were the letters which the post brought from friends endeavouring kindly to administer consolation, which those who wrote them knew well that Burke could never feel. Lord Fitzwilliam had, on the first receipt of the news, written most affectionately from Wentworth, reminding him that Richard would have been the first to deplore such an unavailing grief ; for that "a more firm, a more decided, a more manly mind was not to be found." The Comte d'Artois, from Rotterdam, sent a gracious letter, regretting the loss of one who "*par ses qualités et sa parfaite loyauté aurait pu être si utile à sa station et à la cause qui intéresse l'humanité entière.*" And Grattan, from Dublin, eloquently condoled with Burke on having "now no other prospect of immortality than that which is common to Cicero or to Bacon ; such as can never be interrupted while there exists the beauty of order or the love of virtue, and can fear no death except what barbarity may impose upon the globe." Grattan's eloquent suggestions were as vainly made to Burke, as some still more eloquent reflections were to Cicero ; and as in si-

milar circumstances such thoughts must ever be. Nature has wisely perhaps ordained that under such afflictions great orators and great philosophers are but poor suffering men, feeling the same pangs as the most ordinary of human beings.\*

George III. thought of administering more material relief. Ever since Burke had carried his great scheme of economical reform, the feeling had been generally entertained that some provision ought to be made by the State for one who had rendered such great public services, and who had, through his attachment to his political principles, not had the opportunity of being rewarded by the emoluments of office as other statesmen had been. His friend Frederick Montague, on retiring from the Treasury on the death of Lord Rockingham, had publicly, in the House of Commons, expressed his regret that he had not during his short tenure of office signed a warrant for a pension to Burke, who had certainly deserved such a mark of public gratitude infinitely more than Colonel Barré. Twelve more laborious years had since then passed over Burke's head. As Paymaster he had saved immense sums of money to the country. He had been appointed the public prosecutor by the House of Commons, and his exertions in that office had never been equalled, most certainly had never been surpassed. His writings and speeches on the French Revolution had also, by the acknowledgment of by far the great majority of the people, done inestimable service to England, by invoking the principles of loyalty, patriotism, and nationality among the people. Many persons believed that he had even saved the Constitution under which they lived; and though others might dispute the

\* See Correspondence, vol. iv. pp. 224, 533, and 229.

fact, his merits in this cause had at least been very much more obvious than those of other public benefactors whose supposed services had been yearly rewarded by immense grants of public money. Yet he was still a poor man, oppressed with debts, and without the most trifling public reward. His friends had even just joined the Ministry, and yet, at that very conjuncture, he had taken the opportunity of retiring from office without making the slightest stipulation for himself. The chastening hand of Providence had been laid heavily upon him ; he was old, childless, desolate, broken-hearted ; his hopes were prostrated ; his dreams at an end. All the world, who knew the loss he had suffered, sympathized with him in his affliction. It was at this time, on the last day of what Burke called "this unfortunate August, 1794," he received a letter from Pitt, informing him that in the course of the next session his Majesty intended applying to Parliament to be enabled to confer an annuity upon him more proportioned to his sense of Burke's public services than he had it then in his power to bestow, and in the meanwhile had directed to be prepared an immediate grant out of the civil list of twelve hundred a year.\*

Burke had little difficulty in accepting his Majesty's considerate proposal. No honours nor emoluments that kings or ministers might confer could indeed give him any real comfort. Life had lost all charms. He had written to a friend two or three days before Richard died, "Whether I am to have any objects depends upon his recovery ;" and again, after he had been informed of the King's intention respecting the pension, "It signifies little," he said, "how these last days are spent ; and, on

\* Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 230.

my death, I think they will pay my debts." But while he was thus taking the measure of his unmade grave, his debts were his real inconvenience; and it was to have the power to discharge those debts which induced him to convey, through his friend John King, then an Under-Secretary of State, his acceptance of the offer. That offer was expressly coupled in Pitt's letter with the condition of it being proposed to Parliament; and this was, as Burke mentioned in his answer, what he himself particularly desired, since it would then be a kind of public testimonial in favour of the purity of his character and the patriotism of his conduct. Pitt again wrote on the eighteenth of September, after Burke's consent had been communicated to him, "I flatter myself I shall have best met your wishes with respect to the present grant out of the Civil List, by directing it to be made out to yourself, for your own life and that of Mrs. Burke, to commence from the fifth of January, 1793. With respect to the remaining part of the arrangement, which requires the assistance of Parliament, my idea of it has been exactly what you understood, and it will be a very honourable and gratifying part of my duty to take the first opportunity of conveying the King's recommendation for carrying it into effect." \*

Yet "this very honourable and gratifying part of his duty" Pitt never performed. Burke accepted the grant out of the Civil List on the condition that the remainder of the pension should be brought before Parliament, and this condition Pitt considered himself at liberty to disregard. Although the offer had come spontaneously from the King and the Minister without Burke or any of his friends ever having made any application or suggestion

\* Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 239.



on the subject, yet when Parliament met, the Minister declined to introduce the subject, allowed month after month to slip away without doing anything in the business; and it was not until more than a year afterwards, in the October of 1795, that the remainder of the pension was conferred, through certain duties on lives, for two thousand five hundred pounds a year in a fund called the West Indian Four-and-a-half per Cents. This was in the power of the Crown when Pitt made his first proposal to Burke at the end of August in 1794 just as much as in the autumn of 1795, when the grant was thus tardily and ungraciously made.

Burke was much displeased, as he had good reason for being, with the very unsatisfactory manner in which the Minister only half performed the obligation he had voluntarily undertaken. Pitt was guilty of a direct breach of faith. As soon as the offer of the pension became known, some of the newspapers in the democratic and Indian interests began to revile Burke as an interested apostate, who had sold himself to the Government, and deserted his principles through the most interested motives. They considered the mere fact of the pension a full confirmation of the charges of inconsistency and dishonesty which they had long made against him for his conduct with respect to Hastings and the French Revolution. This abuse appears partly to have influenced Pitt as to intimidate him from making a regular Parliamentary motion on the subject of Burke's pension. It does not seem to have occurred to him that after his letters to Burke of the thirtieth of August and the eighteenth of September, he was bound in honour to introduce the question into the House of Commons. It is scarcely possible to excuse the Minister's conduct, for had such a motion

been made by the Government, there does not appear to be the slightest reason for supposing that it would not have been carried. Who, indeed, on any just grounds could have negatived such a proposal? Fox might regret the course Burke had taken on the French Revolution, but he would assuredly have been one of the last men to refuse his sanction to a grant to relieve his old friend, at such a time, from the pecuniary burdens which he had contracted during his long and laborious life. It is difficult to suppose that even the rabid Indian file could have said anything deserving an answer against such a resolution. Nevertheless Pitt shrank from doing what he himself had proposed, and evidently represented to the King that the House of Commons might refuse such a proposal if it were brought before it in due form. Pitt's conduct was inexcusable. Burke commented upon it confidentially to his friend Laurence: "He has delayed it so long that he is partly ashamed, partly afraid, and partly unwilling to bring it on." He made, however, no public complaint. In one way or another he would be furnished with the means of paying his debts; and, said he, "submission is my duty and my policy."\*

This is a strange world. Though the whole amount Burke received from the pension while he lived scarcely amounted to more than ten thousand pounds, and though even in actual money he had been the means of saving hundreds of thousands of pounds to the public, there were then, and have been since, persons who thought the Government prodigal and Burke corrupt in this transaction. Pitt, it is true, might have a large official income, and, as Warden of the Cinque Ports, be in the enjoyment of a lucrative sinecure, without any family

\* Laurence Correspondence, p. 34.

encumbrances, or apparent means of expense, die in poverty, and have his debts paid by Parliament; and still be considered a model of disinterestedness. Fox might inherit large estates, waste them in gambling, and only, during the preceding year, accept contributions from his wealthy political friends, many of whom, though then estranged from him, subscribed to the fund, with Burke's cordial approval. Fox's debts, too, were at his death to be paid without a murmur by Parliament. Chatham could also receive a pension in the full vigour of his manhood, while he was still a Member of the House of Commons, enjoy it for nearly twenty years, and still be regarded as a remarkably pure and disinterested patriot. But for Burke to accept anything from the Crown in his old age, poverty, and affliction, was quite wrong. He was to be singled out as pre-eminently the Pensioner. His life was to be spelt backwards. To him was language to be applied such as had never stigmatized the mercenary self-seeking of a Doddington or a Wedderburne, and which would have been considered most ungenerous and calumnious if applied to such pensioners as Dunning and Barré. All this was very miserable. But the most melancholy feature of the case is that even at the present day in certain quarters the same illiberal prejudices may be seen to exist against Burke for his acceptance of this pension; and tests are applied to his conduct which it can indeed fully sustain, but which would be regarded as squeamish, ridiculous, and ungenerous, when applied to the life of any other English statesman. Once admit the principle that public men for their public services are entitled to public rewards, and it can be conclusively shown that no public man in any age or in any country ever had stronger claims to

such reward than Burke. So strong indeed was this claim, that the only fault to be found with the grant of the pension is in the manner in which it was made. The award ought not to have been left to the Crown alone. It would have been much more satisfactory to all parties, the Crown, the Government, the people, and to Burke himself, had the grant passed through the House of Commons. But it was not his fault that a vote upon it was not taken. He suffered the obloquy which Pitt ought to have borne.

Had those who began in the public prints to revile Burke known his state of mind when the first proposal of the pension was made to him, even the most hot-headed of partisans, the most unscrupulous of Jacobin slanderers might probably have paused in their vituperation. He was seen wandering in his fields, his increasing stoop perceptible to those who had known him long. The peasants, who had delighted to meet him, and were sure to have a kind word of recognition, now avoided him, awe-stricken at the spectacle of so much grief. He could not sleep, and he would frequently be observed at sunrise walking about; his head, as his eyes, were bent downwards, moving to and fro, with a peculiar oscillation which had long been characteristic of him, but which had suddenly grown still more marked and decided. His house, which had lately seemed like an hotel, from the visitors, so many of them French, regularly coming and going while he resided there, was silent and deserted. None, except one or two very intimate friends, were received. From the day of his son's death Burke declined all invitations, and never dined out of his own house. His door was closed. He who had been so ready to receive almost everybody studiously shunned all vi-

sitors, and only wished to be left alone with his great sorrow.

It is not uninstrusive to note the objects which for the moment revived his interest in human affairs, and roused him to exertion. None of them were selfish. They all had some good, disinterested, and charitable purpose in view. A report was spread in Ireland that he was to be made provost of the Dublin University. This, which was really an academical appointment, had, though a scandalous job, common enough at that time in the official Ireland, been long ago given to his old acquaintance Hely Hutchinson. Hutchinson's death was hourly expected, and Burke wrote earnestly to Windham about the unfounded rumours respecting himself. "If my Richard had lived," he said, "for whom alone I could bear to take any charge, I would not accept it on any account." He most earnestly requested Windham to impress upon the Duke of Portland the importance of allowing the University, according to the law, to choose its own Provost. "My heart," concluded Burke, "is very sick, but it still has these things in it."\*

One day the Lord Chancellor, Loughborough, kindly broke in upon his grief. Burke took the opportunity of recommending to his patronage a poor clergyman who was engaged to a very pleasing and amiable young lady, the daughter of another clergyman in the neighbourhood, and all whose matrimonial and worldly prospects depended on getting the reversion of a certain living which was about to fall vacant. Burke's recommendation was effectual. The two young people were made happy. "Without this preferment," wrote Burke, in thanking the Chancellor, "there was no hope of their

\* Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 228.

union. All the parties have a considerable degree of merit; and they feel much gratitude for the happiness they enjoy, and the good prospect which, in their estimate, lies before them. I am sure I am myself extremely obliged to you on this occasion, and should think myself much to blame if I neglected to make you my best acknowledgments.”\*

About the same melancholy time he received a letter which affected him as deeply, he said, as any that ever came into his hands; but “to these unhappy hands,” he exclaimed with harrowing pathos, “can never come anything that is cheerful.” He received a letter from the Abbé de la Bintinnaye, telling him that the good and aged Bishop of Auxerre, who had been so kind to poor Richard when he resided in that town, had been driven by the progress of the republican arms from Aix-la-Chapelle, where, with the wrecks of his property, he had taken refuge, and that he was obliged to wander from place to place on the Continent, almost destitute, as was feared, of the ordinary means of subsistence. Burke immediately enclosed for the prelate’s acceptance a bank-note of fifty pounds, confessing however afterwards to another friend that though the amount was not great, it was not every day he could command such a sum. “But,” said he, “if my fortune was such as to second my sentiments, no person whom my Richard loved, or from whom he received the slightest favour, should know what it was to be in distress.”†

Another relative of the Bintinnayes, the Archbishop of Bordeaux, was from the same cause placed in circumstances as painful as the Bishop of Auxerre. Burke

\* See Appendix to the Laurence Correspondence, p. 298.

† Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 246.

was informed that the Archbishop intended coming over to this country. In reply the broken-hearted statesman pointed out the hardships to which an aged Catholic prelate of high rank must be exposed in England ; and advised him rather to choose Spain, a Catholic country, in which he might expect much more general sympathy. " I believe," he wrote, " the Archbishop is little aware of the situation of a Frenchman of rank, advanced in life and ignorant of our language, in exile in England. There is one house in which upon occasion he would have been received with pride and pleasure, but that house and its feeble hospitality are no more." With Mrs. Crewe, too, whose kindness to himself and her friend Mrs. Burke was unremitting, Burke corresponded earnestly about the proceedings of the Committee for the relief of the French clergy, and entered into every little economical detail and careful calculation for the comfort of the refugees, while his own hearth was desolate and all his hopes were destroyed.

As the days of October and November passed on, his interest in political events slowly revived. Though both at home and abroad there was nothing in the aspect of affairs to give him any pleasure, though all the horizon was dark and lowering, yet the very anxiety which he began again to feel for the public was, in some measure, a relief from the acuteness of the pangs he suffered daily, and every hour in the day, from his deep domestic wound. Republican France had burst every military barrier which the allies had vainly raised, and threatened to subjugate the whole Continent. The coalition between the old Whigs and the Government had not yet produced any salutary effect ; and Burke, seeing that there was some hesitation in sending Lord Fitzwilliam to Ireland

on his projected mission of conciliation, felt much apprehension lest the great body of the Roman Catholics should throw themselves entirely into the arms of the Jacobins. There was a talk of the Duke of Portland and his friends resigning in the event of Lord Fitzwilliam not immediately succeeding Lord Westmoreland as Lord Lieutenant, and beginning a system of reform in the Irish administration; and Burke so far interfered as to counsel them not to precipitate a decision and retire from the Cabinet until every means to carry out the object they had in view should be exhausted.

Windham frequently rode down from London to spend a night at Beaconsfield. His visits were always a great relief to Burke, and seemed to recall him to life. He could tell him the latest and the most secret political news; and, though Secretary-at-War, privately speak with contempt of the lukewarm manner in which Pitt seemed carrying on the contest, and the half-measures he was disposed to adopt to conciliate the Opposition. But though the friendship between Burke and Windham was so warm, and the younger disciple had so long looked up with absolute reverence to his great political master, yet was there in Windham's mind perhaps more of logical subtlety and nervous sensitiveness than was quite agreeable to his great preceptor. Laurence exactly hit this peculiarity of Windham's disposition, when, in a letter to Burke, he spoke of it as a "rather too refining and argumentative candour."\* Though Windham had gradually adopted all Burke's views on the French Revolution, he had at first only kept his opinions to himself, and even when the Appeal to the Old Whigs came out after the quarrel with Fox, had not positively declared

\* Laurence Correspondence, p. 25:



himself, through a reluctance to make the breach in the Opposition ranks more obvious than was unavoidable. When the second edition of that work was published with the preface, informing the public that the order of the two last members had been changed "on the suggestion of a very learned person, to the partiality of whose friendship I owe much, to the severity of whose judgment I owe more," the allusion was generally supposed to be to Windham. But on the subject being mentioned in Burke's presence he, with a smile, said that at the time he wrote that sentence, he did not exactly know what Windham's real sentiments were on the Appeal, and that it was to another gentleman this prefatory compliment was paid, as a very poor instalment of a very heavy debt.\*

The very learned person of the preface to the Appeal was Dr. French Laurence. At this time he might even be considered beyond Windham in intimacy with Burke, and has been not undeservedly called the latest and dearest of his friends. One of the last wishes of Richard on his deathbed was that Laurence should succeed him in the representation of Malton; Burke earnestly desired to bring about the same result; and, though the object was not exactly attained, the aged statesman had Laurence's interest at heart, and, in this his childless and broken-hearted old age, looked upon him as his adopted son.

Dr. French Laurence was the son of a highly respectable tradesman at Bath. His family on the mother's side being descended from the Frenches of Galway, he was distantly related by her father's side with Miss French, Burke's niece, who was now Mrs. Thomas Haviland. Educated at Winchester College, under Dr. Joseph Whar-

\* See the Preface to the Laurence Correspondence, p. 4.

ton, Laurence very early displayed lively and poetical talents, which were much admired by his schoolmaster ; and his boyish verses were criticized with much ability by his father, who seems to have been a man of a cultivated mind, far superior in attainments to most persons of his station in that age. After his father's death Laurence was sent to Corpus Christi College at Oxford ; and after attaining his Fellowship, became a law student of the Middle Temple. His powers of application were great ; his general knowledge extensive and various ; and, after abandoning the study of the common law, he took his degree of LL.D. at Oxford, and became one of the most learned civilians of his day. Even during the first year in which he entered Doctors' Commons, and before he was technically qualified to plead, his reputation was already so great that he was, with Sir William Scott, appointed counsel to the Managers for the Impeachment of Warren Hastings. This was the beginning of his public life, and of his intimacy with Burke, who highly appreciated his abilities, and to whom Laurence was of the greatest assistance in drawing up the charges, and advising on the various legal technicalities which arose as the business proceeded. He made himself fully master of the whole subject of the prosecution, fully understood and respected Burke's determined animosity to Hastings ; and being eminently a conscientious man, it is worthy of remark that in sending a copy of the charges to a friend he deliberately declared that there was not one which, on the most mature information and reflection, he did not believe to be strictly true, and not a single point in the defence which was not either fallacious or false. He was exactly the man to please and co-operate with Burke. His nature was thoroughly

manly. There was courage in his eye, decision on his brow, and wit and wisdom even in his most trifling effusions. The poetical talents which he had manifested in boyhood were very early called forth in the service of the Whigs; and some of the keenest contributions to the *Rolliad* and the *Probationary Odes* came from his satirical pen. He was in fact the editor of the series when they were published in a collected form; and both the *Advertisement* and the *Dedication* to the *Rolliad* were his productions. Everything about him was on a large scale: his learning, his industry, and even his physical proportions, which were frequently the object of good-natured jokes by his friends. Sir Joshua Reynolds told him one day that Fox had declared him to be one of the most extraordinary men he ever knew: "alluding," continued the wicked Sir Joshua, on seeing that Laurence was delighted with the information, "alluding, I suppose, to your great size and gigantic exertions." "Throw yourself into the Oxford coach and come down this evening," wrote Burke one day from Beaconsfield to Doctors' Commons; "all that you need bring with you is a large cloak bag, but not quite so large as yourself." His friendship with Burke, which had begun on the Impeachment of Hastings, was cemented by the French Revolution. To him the proof-sheets of the *Reflections* were submitted, and he read, approved, and admired. On the three great leading questions, the prosecution of Hastings, the French Revolution, and the emancipation of the Roman Catholics, he heartily adopted Burke's views without qualification, reserve, or hesitation. He became in fact one of the Burke family. An apartment, which was called Laurence's room, was allotted to him in the house at Beaconsfield; and his tall figure, genial

face, and hearty laugh, were ever welcome. When Mrs. Burke came up occasionally for a day on business to town, she would gratify the learned civilian by dining with him in his dusty chambers in Doctors' Commons ; when the family were either at Margate or Bath in the summer, Burke, his brother, and his wife, would gaily unite in writing a joint epistle to Laurence ; he, in return, would reply with equal gaiety to " my dear E. B., J. B., and R. B. ;" and Laurence, while they were absent on such excursions, would go down to Beaconsfield, give any command he might consider necessary in the house, see that the pigs had plenty of peas, and if the weather was wet, that the sheep were kept in the driest part of the park.\*

But the season of jokes and merriment was over. That once happy family was, as Laurence remarked, a miserable ruin. He had to soothe the afflicted and to try to comfort the broken-hearted. The duties of friendship were by him nobly performed ; he was ready at every call ; and during Burke's agonizing sorrow in the autumn and winter of 1794, watched over him with almost filial tenderness. Windham and Laurence took counsel together, and they managed by turns to go down to Beaconsfield, and endeavour to divert the current of Burke's grief, by setting him to think and talk over the political affairs of that most anxious time.

Though his grief was incurable, at the close of 1794 he looked forward with much of his old spirit to the meeting of Parliament. On that day, the thirtieth of December, he wrote earnest letters to Windham, alluding pathetically to his great loss, hoping that the new year

\* See the amusing letter of the 29th of October, 1792, Laurence Correspondence, p. 23.

would bring better auspices than the dreadful one that was just terminating, and still advising him to enter into no compromise with Jacobinism. The letters appear to have had some effect. Windham spoke strongly in the debate on the Address and advised every Member to read again and again the Reflections, of which, though many people disagreed with it at the time, the truth had in all respects been confirmed by time. Though Burke was no longer a Member of the House of Commons, his spirit still pervaded the place in which he had so long sat, and his sentiments, either in praise or censure, were generally referred to by the Ministerial and Opposition speakers, as they separately rose to address the House. Fox said, that though Windham might now recommend Burke's book, there was a time when the right honourable gentleman was himself one of the sceptics respecting its merits; and though Fox's remark was unkindly made, it does not appear to have been altogether without foundation.\* Pitt spoke strongly on the duty of steadily carrying on the war; but the manner in which it had been misconducted during the two years it had continued, and during the last year still more grossly than during the first, had made many of his followers anxious for peace. They did not hesitate to avow their pacific sentiments; and from this time, through Pitt's manifest incapacity as a war minister, the ranks of the phalanx, as the minority still proudly called themselves, began again to increase.

But as Burke, in his solitude at Beaconsfield, read the debates reported by the Morning Chronicle, there was another scene at the beginning of 1795, in which his interest was for the time still more strongly concentrated

\* See Parliamentary History, vol. xxxi. p. 1058.

than in the proceedings of the English Parliament. Lord Fitzwilliam had at last gone to Ireland as Lord Lieutenant. He considered himself to have full powers to carry out the measures for the relief of the Catholics, which poor Richard Burke had advised in 1792, and which in the following year had been partly conceded. As a French fleet was expected off the coast, and as an invasion might at any moment be anticipated, to remove disabilities and enlist the Irish patriots in the service of the Crown seemed to him most judicious. He was welcomed enthusiastically. Grattan brought into the House of Commons an Emancipation Bill, of which it was understood that the Lord Lieutenant had approved. On the measure being sent over to England for the sanction of the Government here, an unexpected hitch occurred. Days and weeks passed away, and the Bill was not returned to Ireland. Grattan wrote privately to Burke, asking him to interpose and impress upon the English ministry the necessity of consenting to the Bill. Burke, as earnest as ever to do good, hurried up to town, took up his residence at Nerot's Hotel, and did everything he could to induce the Ministers to concede the Catholic claims. What miserable years of agitation, dissension, insurrection, sorrow, hatred, and strife might have been saved both to England and Ireland had his advice been taken, and this Emancipation Bill been allowed then, with the authority of Government, to proceed quietly through the Irish Parliament! The Act of Union had not yet passed; the Protestant bigotry of England was not roused, and indeed scarcely thought itself interested in the measure; the concession would have been regarded merely as an act of provincial policy; and Great Britain and Ireland might then have been really united, instead of having,

as afterwards by the manner it was effected by Pitt, a Union only in name. The Ministers took just the opposite course. In the midst of the session, while the Bill was in suspense and the hopes of all the Catholics were strongest, in the full meridian of his popularity Lord Fitzwilliam was recalled from the Lord Lieutenancy. The Protestant junto had been too strong for him. He had dared to remove a Beresford from office, and to remove a Beresford from office in the days of the Protestant ascendancy, was among the Orangemen, who had long wallowed in the patronage of the State, regarded with horror, similar to that with which the Hindoos would behold the execution of a Brahmin. In an evil hour for his reputation as a statesman, Pitt allowed himself to be coerced by the Protestant intriguers and by the King's prejudices; and Burke's advice was totally thrown away. The Ministers, some of whom were his own friends, did not even tell him that Lord Fitzwilliam's recall had been resolved upon, when the despatch bearing the official mandate was on its way to Ireland; and they allowed him to receive the information through what in parliamentary euphemism are called the ordinary channels of intelligence.

He learnt the news with dismay. It was not a time to allow of a false step. He thought of his poor Richard sleeping placidly in the church at Beaconsfield, and all that he had hoped, and indeed expected to be the instrument in accomplishing, through Earl Fitzwilliam's Lord Lieutenancy. Cruelly indeed had all those bright anticipations been extinguished. Richard was in his grave; Lord Fitzwilliam had been recalled; and Catholic Emancipation was a dream. But Jacobinism, the French fleet, discontent, and disloyalty were no dream.

Burke saw clearly in the future, insurrections, invasions, and civil wars ; and it gave him no comfort to know that had his counsels been followed, those dreadful evils would have been avoided. He wrote on this subject the second letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe, an admirable supplement to the preceding epistle to the same accomplished gentleman, but much sadder in its forebodings of the evil which, from the policy adopted in high places, he was sure would come. "What a sad thing it is," he observed in a prophecy which the sad history of many terrible years was to confirm, "that the grand instructor, Time, has not yet been able to teach the grand lesson of his own value ; and that in every question of moral and political prudence, it is the choice of the moment which renders the measure serviceable or useless, noxious or salutary."

The person with whom Burke corresponded most assiduously on this question was an enlightened Roman Catholic priest, the Rev. Dr. Hussey, afterwards the Roman Catholic Bishop of Waterford. That gentleman's services had been more than once required by the English Government in Catholic countries, and he was now in Ireland anxiously endeavouring to see the Emancipation Act carried, and superintending, under the sanction of the Duke of Portland, the establishment of an Irish College for the education of the Catholic clergy. He had been long and intimately known both to Burke and to his lost Richard, and had been deservedly esteemed by them both. He combined many rare and excellent qualities ; and was admirably fitted to act as a mediator between the Irish Catholics and the British Government. Born in Ireland, he loved his native country, and he united in his person two characters which unfortunately are not often found in the same individual, that of a zeal-



ous Roman Catholic priest and that of an enlightened and liberal statesman. Though attached to the Irish popular party, and anxious to see his countrymen and co-religionists enjoying equal rights and privileges with the Protestant minority, he was in no sense a Jacobin, but sincerely loyal to the English Government. It is sufficient praise of Dr. Hussey to say that on those questions he was worthy to correspond with Burke.

Their opinions generally agreed. Burke had found a priest who, like himself, hated Jacobinism with all his heart, and yet wished to see the Roman Catholic majority of Irishmen enjoy real freedom. They were both grievously disappointed by Lord Fitzwilliam's recall, and both looked with just apprehension to the future. At the request of the English Government, and particularly of the Duke of Portland, Dr. Hussey remained in Ireland, and superintended the plan of the Irish College, which they were willing to establish, since the hopes of Ireland had in other respects been frustrated. The result was the Catholic College of Maynooth, of which Dr. Hussey was appointed the first President ; and on all the principles and details he consulted Burke. Protestant England raised no cry at this concession of the Tory ministry. Nearly fifty years afterwards another English Government found it more difficult to increase the grant than Pitt had done to establish it. The Emancipation Act in Ireland might then have apparently been passed, with as little trouble ; though after the Union, it could only be carried through the English Parliament by something which resembled a revolution and at the hazard of a civil war. Burke declared that a Union without Emancipation was an absurdity ; but unfortunately both for England and Ireland this truth Pitt could not or would not see.

After going up to town on the affairs of Ireland, Burke remained to see the termination of another business, in which his own sentiments were as little respected as in Lord Fitzwilliam's recall from the Irish viceroyalty.

The last scene of the impeachment approached. Though Hastings and his friendly majority in the House of Lords had so long complained of the slow progress of the trial, the curtain could not fall on the drama which had so long wearied both the spectators and actors in Westminster Hall, without weeks of long formalities and delay. The Peers, however, could not now complain. The Managers for the Commons had functionally ceased to exist; the business was left to their Lordships alone; and yet they laboriously occupied nearly a whole session in pronouncing a judgment which everybody knew to have been long ago predetermined. In January, immediately after the meeting of Parliament, they appointed a committee to inspect the journals and report on the manner in which their predecessors had given judgments. This report was referred to a Committee of the whole House, and gave rise to long contentions, in which the Lord Chancellor and the ex-Lord Chancellor took opposite sides: Thurlow contending, with characteristic arrogance, that the Managers had not proved a single charge of criminality; and Loughborough replying, with great force of reasoning and legal acumen, that nearly all the charges had been established. One of the first acts of their Lordships, in commencing the trial, had been, against Burke's strongest remonstrances, to compel the Managers to bring forward the whole body of their evidence on all the charges at once. In giving judgment the majority of the Lords thought fit to proceed on the contrary principle, and resolved that they would take each article

separately, and even judge of some of them in separate parts. Afterwards they determined to go over the subject, first in a Committee of the whole House, then in the House itself, and at last only as judges in Westminster Hall. The next step was to decide upon the exact questions to be put in Westminster Hall, and it was not until the seventeenth of April that these were finally settled.

But on the twenty-third of the same month, the great Hall was once more crowded with rank, beauty, and fashion. The Lords were to give their judgment openly, and though no person doubted what the judgment would be, the historical scene could not but excite intense interest. Seven years had gone since the great trial had been opened in that Hall; out of the hundred and sixty peers who had marched in the great procession on that memorable thirteenth of February, 1788, sixty slept in their ancestral vaults; and those who were school-boys at Eton on that day, had grown up to manhood, and sat on the benches which their fathers had occupied when Burke began his opening speech. The seals had been opened; and everything seemed to have become new. Political friendships, which promised to be immutable, had been violently dissolved; the brightest hopes had been darkened; French Revolutions had been. Politicians whose names had been never heard of in the February of 1788 had become eminent, appalled the world by their crimes, and one after the other been summarily executed. Constitutions had been formed and extinguished in blood. Great kings and illustrious queens, in whose veins flowed many generations of royal and imperial blood, had been sent to the scaffold. Who in 1788 had heard of the guillotine, and who had not heard of it on this twenty-third of April? Five hundred and forty thousand French-

men were in arms, bursting through the Pyrenees and the Alps, subduing the whole of the Austrian Netherlands, and threatening to overrun all Germany. England was contending almost vainly against republican France, subsidizing foreign Powers, and striking indeed vigorously but blindly with her right arm, though almost paralyzed with her left.

The great actors on the public stage seemed all different men to what they had been, and even their numerous admirers were much sadder and less sanguine. The events on the Continent appeared to have made Pitt, who was always lean, look much leaner. Fox had grown decidedly more corpulent, but it was not the corpulence of health ; and though but at middle age, amid his black bushy hair there were already significant streaks of grey, soon to become white. Sheridan, whose features at the beginning of the trial still retained much of their original grace, animation, and intelligence, appeared decidedly less prepossessing ; his long and frequent midnight orgies with his illustrious patron, the Prince of Wales, had left their traces on his face, which was gradually becoming covered with red spots, and his nose so rubicund as to acquire to its owner the appropriate nickname of Bardolph. Francis looked as keen, as wiry, and as unrelenting as ever. Time seemed to have made but little impression on Hastings, but his head was much balder, and, though the moment of his anticipated triumph had arrived, he appeared much graver than when he first stood at that bar. But the saddest change of all was observed in Burke. Poor Richard, who had skipped so joyfully about on the benches of the Managers' box when the trial began, was no more, and as every one knew what effect this loss had had upon Burke, he was

an object of painful interest. Many of his acquaintances, who then saw him for the first time after his calamity, were shocked at the sight. He seemed no longer, as he had lately been, hale and vigorous, but broken down, withered, and old.

Only twenty-nine Peers appeared in their robes ready to pronounce judgment. The rest stood in groups about the throne, idly watching the proceedings like the untitled spectators of the scene. Proclamation was made. Hastings, accompanied by his bail, entered, and again humbly knelt at the bar until ordered to rise. The Lord Chancellor Loughborough then stood up with a list of the Lords present who had signified their intention to vote, and beginning with the junior baron, George Lord Douglas, Earl of Morton, put to each of them individually and by name the question, "How says your Lordship, is Warren Hastings, Esq., guilty or not guilty of the said charge?" Each Peer thus addressed rose one after another, uncovered, placed his right hand upon his breast, and pronounced the words guilty or not guilty, "upon my honour." The Archbishop of York, Dr. Markham, was the last but one who voted, and one of the few of his episcopal brethren who took part in the solemnity. He was not deterred by the intimate connection between his son and Hastings, or his own undisguised partisanship, from taking his place as a judge on this great occasion; and of course he said, "Not guilty, upon my honour," with peculiar energy and fervid sanctimoniousness, his eyes looking heavenward as he spoke. The Lord Chancellor, who presided himself, came last, and startled some of Hastings's friends as he gave his vote, which was "Guilty, upon my honour."

This vote was taken upon the second charge. Twenty-

three peers were found in favour of Hastings's acquittal; six pronounced him guilty. On the other charges, particularly on different portions of the sixth, which were put separately, the proportion was still greater in favour of the accused. The Lord Chancellor, after all the votes had been taken on each charge, declared Hastings acquitted on the articles of the impeachment and on every thing that they contained. Again Hastings was summoned to the bar; and again, but for the last time, humbly knelt down, until bade to rise. He was told that he was acquitted, and to be discharged; "on paying your fees," as the Lord Chancellor gravely, but somewhat ludicrously, concluded the welcome intimation. The Lords then adjourned to their own house, and the great ceremony which had so long occupied the attention of the public and the Legislature was over, and the impeachment handed over to the historian, who has ever since been passing upon it some very inconsistent, confused, and inexplicable verdicts.

Hastings retired from Westminster Hall with all the airs of self-conscious martyrdom. In his eyes, and in the eyes of his admirers up to the present day, he was a most meritorious and righteous patriot, who had been for many years most unjustly both persecuted and prosecuted, mainly through Burke's inveterate malignity. The people of India of course counted for nothing according to this conclusion. The Governor-General had a right, as other conquerors had done, to trample their rights under his feet, to set their prejudices at nought, and to confiscate their property at his pleasure, and as the convenience of the State might demand. But with the gradual adoption of a more humane and generous policy towards the populations of the East, and under

the stern teaching of events which never more impressively inculcated their lessons upon the minds of Englishmen than during the years I have been engaged in writing the pages of this biography, the theory of virtuous martyrdom has gradually grown more and more unintelligible. Hastings considered himself the servant of the East India Company, and scarcely responsible for his acts to Parliament at all; but such an assumption will not be pleaded with effect any more during the lifetime of a generation which has witnessed the abolition of the great Company itself by an Act of Parliament, and the doctrine of ministerial responsibility with regard to India, as to every other portion of the British dominions, most distinctly and deliberately asserted.

Burke retired from Westminster Hall, to spend two years in sorrow and retirement at Beaconsfield. He never felt more than in leaving London after the twenty-third of April, that he had acted rightly in being the leading prosecutor of Hastings; that he had nothing to retract, to be ashamed of, or to apologize for in the impeachment; and that no judgment pronounced by a majority of Peers could ever render such acts as those of Hastings to the Rohillas, Cheyt Sing, and the Begums of Oude, other than high crimes and misdemeanours.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

1795-1797.

## IN RETIREMENT.

THE impeachment being ended and all his public duties done, Burke left London for his beloved Beaconsfield. He had taken a dislike to all society, crowds were positively hateful to him, and all he wished for was to be left alone. Before the close of the trial, he was thoughtlessly summoned as a witness, to be examined before the Lords, and though his grief was then so fresh and painful for his recent loss, he was cruelly kept waiting in attendance for two days, and was then never examined at all.\* He was much annoyed at being obliged for no purpose to be publicly stared at for two whole mornings and afternoons, and he felt that existence could only be tolerable to him amid the woods and fields he had loved so long. All his books and pictures which he had kept in town for years, while engaged in his Parliamentary duties, were packed up and conveyed down to Beaconsfield. There now was his only home. There he humbly hoped to die.

For what indeed had he to live? The tie connecting him by blood with the future had been suddenly severed. The three great political objects he had so long had in view were in the same months all apparently frustrated. Hastings had been acquitted; Ireland was, by the pro-

\* See Preface to vol. v. of the quarto edition of his Works, posthumously published.



ceedings of the English Ministry, gradually approaching to the verge of rebellion ; and the Jacobins were victorious on the Continent. The great European coalition, of which his son and himself had so anxiously watched the formation, was, owing to the ill-success which had attended the arms of the Royalists, gradually falling to pieces. The Stadtholder had been driven from Holland, and the Batavian republic had been established under the guardianship of France. The King of Prussia had been the first to declare war against the Jacobins ; and he had been the first to sue for peace. His indifference to the cause for which he professedly took up arms had long been suspected, and though he had been subsidized with millions of English gold, the news had just arrived that he had at last deserted the European confederacy, and had signed at Basle a treaty of peace, by which he abandoned his allies and gave up to France the coveted left bank of the Rhine.

These were all subjects of melancholy reflection to Burke, as he endeavoured to establish himself in his country retirement. He would for days together fall into fits of deep dejection, from which he would rouse himself for a few hours of vigorous intellectual exertion, and then again yield to still deeper despondency. Lord Inchiquin's beautiful mansion of Cliefden was burnt down, and Burke's regret at this loss of his friend and neighbour, and his anxiety to provide for the comforts of the homeless establishment, gave him some hours of occupation. His gloom was also this May relieved by a different kind of shock, which, though disagreeable at the time, was beneficial in its effects. On taking up his newspaper to read, as usual, the Parliamentary debates of the preceding evening, he found to his astonishment that the

Duke of Norfolk, in making an elaborate speech on Lord Fitzwilliam's recall from Ireland, had blamed the *Reflections* on the French Revolution, and Burke as the author of that work, for nearly all the troubles which had arisen in Europe. Burke and his book had incited Paine to attack the Constitution and Christianity. They had caused the expulsion of the French Minister, and the outbreak of the French war. They had produced the disunion in the Whig party, the coalition between the old Whigs and the Ministers, and even, as his Grace argued by some singular process of logic, had led to Lord Fitzwilliam's recall, which had done so much mischief in Ireland.\*

Burke was both annoyed and amused at the Duke of Norfolk's attack. This duke, called particularly the Protestant Duke of Norfolk, was one of the most singular characters of his time. He was the Earl of Surrey of the days of Lord North's administration, a stanch champion of what he considered liberty, and a warm partisan of Fox. He was a nobleman of strong sense and real independence and manliness of mind. Here however his panegyric must end. The head of the English peerage, and Deputy-Field Marshal of England, this the most illustrious of dukes, was also one of the most dirty, dissolute, and drunken of men. His size was enormous, and his person so coarse, rude, and ungainly, that he looked like a huge butcher. Though as a Protestant Peer he sat in the House of Lords, he was much suspected of being attached to the older creed, and it was rumoured that the plain blue coat which he always wore, and the manner in which, at a time when everybody else wore powder, he appeared with his hair cut short, were singularities imposed upon him by the priests as a pe-

\* See *Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxxi. p. 1498.

nance for his outward apostasy. Fox and Sheridan were not abstemious men; but neither they nor their friend, that professional toper, his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, could drink half the quantity of wine which the Duke of Norfolk imbibed, when all the other guests at the board had long been speechless underneath the table. It must have been from the lives of such noblemen as his Grace, that the vulgar saying, "as drunk as a lord," was derived; an aphorism which, with the reformed habits of the present day, has happily lost all meaning. When drunk he was known to have slept all night in the streets on the pavement or on a bulk. So much did he abhor water, that he was scarcely ever known voluntarily to wash himself, and it was when he was insensible from intoxication that his servants were obliged to take the opportunity of washing his Grace's person and putting upon it a change of linen. One day he complained to a friend of the rheumatism, and he was asked in reply, "Pray, my lord, did you ever try a clean shirt?"\*

Such was the distinguished nobleman who, as a censor of morals, thought fit in the House of Lords to denounce Burke's *Reflections* as the cause of most of the evils of the time. It was to comment on this attack and in defence of himself that Burke roused himself from his despair and wrote the letter to William Elliot, Esq., one of the most pleasant and eloquent of all the productions of his brilliant pen. It presents a vivid picture of himself in solitude, with his gnawing sorrows and grief, lamenting the follies of kings whom he had tried to serve, and anticipating the stern lesson of subjugation which the Continent was to receive from the progress of the French arms. This letter may be read over and over again

\* Wraxall's *Post. Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 31.

with renewed delight and admiration. It contains the germ of those thoughts which he afterwards developed in the last of his publications, and, equal as it is to anything he ever wrote, shows that amid all his misery and wretchedness, in force, wit, and fancy he had lost nothing. This epistle Burke fully intended for publication, as an answer to the Duke of Norfolk, whom it disposed of in a very complete manner. But it is a striking fact, as showing how indifferent Burke really was to the mere literary reputation of his works, independent of the objects they were written to serve, that though it could not but have been universally read and admired, on finding after it was finished that the Duke of Norfolk's attack upon him was soon forgotten by the public, Burke deliberately suppressed this charming little production, and it was never published until after his death.\*

The gentleman to whom this letter was addressed was much liked for his gentleness, knowledge, modesty, and intelligence. He had also been much esteemed by poor Richard Burke, who had mentioned him while dying in his list of friends. Hence the afflicted father's pathetic allusions throughout the composition to his recent loss, and to the engraving which a few days before he had presented to his young correspondent. This engraving was one of a series which Burke had had taken from Reynolds's picture of his son, and below which he had inscribed from Dryden's *Eleonora* these lines, enough sadly and truly applied:—

“As precious gums are not for common fire,  
They but perfume the temple and expire;  
So was he soon exhaled and banished hence,  
A short sweet odour at a vast expense.”

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\* See Preface to the quarto edition of his *Posthumous Works*, vol. v.

To them he also added the exclamation :—

“ O dolor atque decus !”

A copy of this engraving, with the two inscriptions, was presented by Burke at this time to each of Richard's former friends, as a memorial of the dear departed. Over the original portrait the father was continually sorrowing, gazing upon it for hours at a time, and endeavouring to recall the virtues of him who was no more.

But this letter to William Elliot, Esq., gave utterance to other painful thoughts which Burke's anxious and brooding manner had for some time entertained, and out of which he was not to be reasoned. Brocklesby and Laurence had informed him that they had been for years disquieted about Richard's appearance, and that the seeds of disease must have been long sown in his constitution. This was told Burke with the best intentions by his two kind friends. It had however a most injurious effect ; for as he had never suspected anything of the kind until Richard's last illness, he thought that what had been visible to others he ought also to have observed ; and he bitterly accused himself of having, through his inattention, been the cause of his son's death. Such reflections caused him many and many an hour of agony, through long days and sleepless nights. “ You know in part what I have lost,” he said to Mr. Elliot, “ and would to God I could clear myself of all neglect and fault in that loss.”

He still delighted in his rural occupations, though he went about them with mournful feelings. In the morning, with a spade or woodman's knife in his hand, he would be seen busy in his grounds, carefully spreading a little fresh soil over patches where the grass was

deficient, or industriously pruning the trees and cutting away the withered branches. One day as he was engaged in this task he was heard to regret, in a beautiful quotation from Virgil, that the trees which he had been so long nursing would afford no shade to his posterity. He paused ; and was heard quietly to correct himself, saying, " Yet be it so ; I ought not therefore to bestow less attention upon them : they grow to God."\*

His sympathies with the labourers in the fields and the poor of Beaconsfield were as benevolent as ever. If there was any difference, he was even gentler and kinder to them under his affliction, than in the happier days of old. He came unexpectedly on a poor boy, eating by the hedge-side his breakfast of porridge. Burke tasted it ; and on being told proudly by the lad that he had even much better for dinner when his father was at home, the old statesman invited himself to dine at their cottage, and professed to enjoy this penurious but wholesome meal. He had long before founded a benefit society for the working men in Beaconsfield, and to the last hour of his life continued to superintend the business of the association with great assiduity and interest. His farming was never more energetic than during this lonely summer, when he was oppressed with grief and literally pined for death, which, as he sadly remarked to a young and sympathizing friend, was the only consolation he sought or could hope to obtain.

As the fatal month of August came round, he had however to comfort another member of his family, under a heavy affliction not very dissimilar to his own. His niece's husband, Captain Thomas Haviland, had, against the entreaties of his friend, joined his regiment, and pro-

\* See Preface to the quarto edition of his *Posthumous Works*.

ceeded with it to the West Indies. The news came that he had fallen a victim to the climate, just as he was being gazetted colonel. That dreadful West Indian war, to the policy of which Burke had so strongly objected, thus affected him in one of his nearest relations and friends. The gallant officer's wife was staying with the family at Beaconsfield, and within a month of the time when she was expected to give birth to a child, when the sad tidings of her husband's death was received. Thus one calamity followed fast upon another. Burke and his wife, the two aged sufferers, had to watch over their young niece, who had, unknown to herself, become a widow before she had become a mother. How was the fact to be communicated to her? If it were told her before the child was born, might not the shock bring on a premature labour, and endanger the life both of the mother and her helpless offspring? If it were told her soon after her confinement, might not the danger be equally great? Under any circumstances it was impossible to conceal the truth long. After much anxious deliberation and consultation with physicians, Burke determined to tell her before the time of labour arrived. It was a sad duty; but it was done. She was afterwards taken to town, that she might have the best and readiest medical assistance at hand; and at the beginning of September safely gave birth to a son. On receipt of the welcome intelligence Mrs. Burke went up to London to see her niece; but Burke was detained at Beaconsfield by a gracious visit from Louis XVIII. and several other members of the French Royal family, who doubtless thought that they were doing a great honour to the sorrowing old man, who had with such unrivalled genius and power upheld their cause and endeavoured once more to set up their fallen throne.

The completion of the grant of Burke's pension was not made until the following month; and two or three weeks before this measure was finally carried out by the tardy and ungracious Minister, Burke's means, on contemplating a journey to Bath, were so limited that his grateful niece, Mrs. Haviland, offered her uncle and aunt a considerable loan, which, however, in a joint letter, signed Jane and Edmund Burke, they kindly declined.\*

This visit to Bath was not made. Burke was anxiously engaged in what he regarded as a very grave duty, and for the moment his domestic sorrows were somewhat relieved as he pondered on the sufferings of the poor, and the foolish expedients which were advocated to remedy them. The summer of 1794 had been very sultry, and the fineness of the days of July, which saw the fall of Robespierre's tyranny and the unexpected end of the Reign of Terror, had been universally remarked. Great heats and excessive droughts had prevailed, and much grass and clover been burnt up. The harvest of wheat, though deficient in quantity, had been excellent in quality; but still flesh and bread grew dear. In the summer of 1795, just as the corn was blooming in the ear, cold east winds set in, and the flower was shrivelled up.

Burke had been for twenty-seven years a practical farmer. In his hours of relaxation from political affairs he had diligently studied, as his letters to Garret Nagle twenty years before abundantly testified, the science of husbandry in every possible way. He had even studied the agricultural treatises of antiquity, and earnestly advised the publication of a new edition of them, though, far from regarding them as trustworthy authorities for English cultivation, he used to say that on such matters

\* Prior, p. 417.



he would prefer following the directions of his own hind.\* He was never tired of conversing with that respectable class of agriculturists who were called hereditary farmers; men who for centuries, from father to son, had tilled the ground of the same farms and formed so characteristic and honourable a feature of the rural life of England. His agricultural knowledge, though sometimes sneered at, was in fact most extensive and profound, as in this season of sorrow and despair he fully and most satisfactorily proved. As soon as he saw the blighting effect of the east wind on the ears of his young corn, he became alarmed and anticipated a dearth. He even set off for London, carrying specimens of the ears of new corn with him, and, showing them to many of his great friends, told them his apprehensions. But in this respect, as in so many others, his anxious warnings were disregarded. The season of harvest came, and the result too surely justified his worst forebodings. Over all England, when the ears of corn were threshed, many of them were found to be quite empty, and the others contained only a small quantity of very indifferent grain. Bread, and indeed provisions of every kind, rose to a most extravagant price; and the poor everywhere suffered severely. In his own neighbourhood Burke did what he could to relieve the distress. Bread he could not give, and indiscriminate charity, he well knew, did no good. But he had a windmill erected on his park, where good corn was ground; and the bread, which he used at his own table, was made in his house, and sold to the poor at a reduced rate. He was indefatigable in seeking to induce his wealthy neighbours to follow his example; and sent them specimens of the bread, which

\* See Preface to the quarto edition of his *Posthumous Works*.

was excellent, to show them with what little trouble how much good might be done to the humbler classes.\*

This was what he did, on a comparatively small scale, as a landed proprietor at Beaconsfield. He prepared to exert his genius as a statesman for the same purpose on a much larger scale, and in a way to benefit all England.

In this season of general scarcity and dearth Parliament was summoned. All the old complaints, which at such times are sure to be revived, and which Burke had previously combated at the beginning of his public life during the administration of the Earl of Chatham, again burst forth. The assistance of the Legislature was to be sought to give that aid which no Legislature can in such circumstances ever wisely give. During the previous session Parliament had, in Burke's opinion, most imprudently stopped the distilleries, and really made flesh dearer rather than cheaper. It was now gravely proposed to interfere directly with the farmers, and give a bench of magistrates the power of raising the wages of the poor, in proportion as the price of bread advanced. As soon as he heard of this frantic scheme, which reminded him very much of the expedients the Jacobins had adopted in France, Burke overcame his reluctance to face a crowd, again went up to London, and wrote an elaborate memorandum, or what he afterwards called *Thoughts and Details on Scarcity*. This he gave to Pitt for his attentive consideration. And the little tract well deserved the attentive perusal of the Prime Minister; for, though hurriedly composed, and afterwards published in an imperfect and fragmentary form, it has been considered one of the most important economical treatises

\* See the letter of a gentleman in the neighbourhood, quoted by Prior, p. 422.

in English literature, and during the great struggle for free trade was frequently quoted by Mr. Cobden and his associates as a marvellous production of the most enlightened wisdom.

It is so indeed. It shows Burke writing on agriculture as Bacon wrote on the planting of trees, and may be read with similar feelings, and perhaps even more admiration. The views are as just and philosophical as anything not only in Bacon's Essays, but even in the *Novum Organum*, and are worthy of the man whom Adam Smith consulted as he wrote the *Wealth of Nations*. Eloquent and imaginative as Burke was, and attached as he was to a country life and farming pursuits, there is nothing rhapsodical or impractical in this splendid fragment. All his reasoning is, as usual, brought to the test of experience. The leading argument, which country gentlemen and a territorial aristocracy have at last been forced to recognize as sound, is that agriculture is a trade; that it must be conducted on the principles of trade; and that anything interfering with it contrary to the laws of trade is sure to produce the most injurious effects. Hence all the expedients recommended to the consideration of the Government incompatible with the ordinary rules of commerce are shown to be most absurd. The interference of the Government at all in the contracts made between the farmer and the labourer is strongly condemned; and Pitt is significantly told, what the advocates of centralization and State superintendence at that time and since, both in France and England, so strongly repudiated, and is so humiliating to the pretension of aspiring legislators who wish to "radiate ideas" and influence the universe, that "It is in the power of Government to prevent much evil; it can do very little positive good in this or perhaps in

anything else." The stoppage of the distilleries, in order to prevent the high price either of corn or flesh, is shown to produce just the contrary effect; and though the advocates of the Maine Liquor Law will think Burke's defence of gin most questionable, and perhaps positively immoral, yet it displays his profound consideration and humane philosophy. "Ardent spirit," he wrote, "is a great medicine, often to remove distempers, much more frequently to prevent them, or to chase them away in their beginnings. It is not nutritive in any great degree. But, if not food, it greatly alleviates the want of it. It invigorates the stomach for the digestion of poor meagre diet not easily alliable in the human constitution. Wine the poor cannot touch. Beer as applied to many occasions (as among seamen and fishermen for instance) will by no means do the business. Let me add, what wits, inspired with champagne and claret, will turn into ridicule, it is a medicine to the mind. Under the pressure of the cares and sorrows of our mortal condition, men have at all times and in all countries called in some physical aid to their moral consolations,—wine, beer, opium, brandy, or tobacco." He acted on his theory. Walking out one day with his niece in his own grounds, he was accosted by a miserable scarecrow of a man who asked for alms. Burke pulled out sixpence from his pocket and gave it to the wretched suppliant. "He will only buy gin with it, uncle," Mrs. Haviland remarked in a tone of remonstrance. "And if gin be any comfort to him, my dear," replied Burke, "let him have gin."

He entered into the ways of the poor in a kind and sympathizing spirit. The Thoughts and Details on Scarcity show how attentively he had studied their condition, and how familiar he was with all the circumstances

affecting their daily life and the value of their labour. He could tell any of his visitors the different scales of wages, and what his neighbours had to pay to the poor-rate in all the parishes of Buckinghamshire. Had he expanded his *Thoughts and Details* as he intended to do, in a series of *Letters on Rural Economics* to his old friend and correspondent on agriculture, Arthur Young, there can be little doubt that the work would have been quite as interesting and valuable as any of his great political treatises. These Letters were even advertised in the newspapers as being prepared for publication. They were expected with much interest. Burke had made however but very little progress in this design when his attention was violently called to a more agitating question of immediate and pressing importance; and the project of the *Letters on Rural Economics* was laid aside, never to be resumed.

The events of the summer and autumn had strongly encouraged the advocates for peace with the French Republic. Pitt had, as we have seen, spoken decidedly against the alternative at the beginning of the last session: but the cry continued to gather strength among his own supporters, as Spain followed Prussia in retiring from the ranks of the Coalition, and England and Austria were left almost alone to maintain the war with the same ill-success of the two preceding years. The Minister, though accused by the French Directory of insincerity in his propositions, really became desirous of a peace, and would have been glad to conclude it on any honourable terms. At last he began to find out that he was never intended by nature for a war minister. The open defection of some of his supporters, though he had at first affected to treat the manifestation lightly, had not

been without effect upon his mind. The bad harvest, the scarcity of provisions, the high price of corn, and the discontent which such a dearth naturally produces among the humbler classes, had no inconsiderable part in making people anxious for the termination of a contest which drained England of millions of money, drenched the Continent with blood, and in return appeared to produce nothing but defeat and shame.

Burke had very different feelings. If republican France was so formidable when the war was begun by England in 1793, on the plea of the opening the Scheldt, she was still more formidable when she had conquered both Belgium and Holland, had fully acquired the left bank of the Rhine, had broken the barriers of both the Pyrenees and the Alps, and was becoming the absolute mistress of Spain and Italy. How, under such circumstances, and independent of the principles on which the revolutionary Directory acted, could anything worthy of the name of peace be signed by England? Such a peace as was then negotiable, Burke regarded with absolute horror. It must leave France omnipotent on the Continent, and England open to the dreadful contagion of her principles. Anything was, in his opinion, better than a humiliating compact which abandoned everything that this country had hitherto professed to support. A war of twenty years, the loss of twenty battles, was in his opinion preferable to such an ignominious termination of the contest. In the circumstances of Europe he considered that England had nothing to do but to fight on.

For some months, in his retirement, he scarcely thought that this desire for an impracticable peace had reached any of the higher official personages. But, at the end of October, a fortnight before he set off for London,

to lay his sentiments on the Scarcity before the Prime Minister, he received a letter and a pamphlet, by which he was very much disturbed. The pamphlet was entitled *Remarks on the Apparent Circumstances of the War in the Fourth Week of October, 1795*, and the letter from the distinguished author of that production, the diplomatic and commercial Lord Auckland. This noble correspondent's letter was highly complimentary, and informed Burke that the production he sent him had originally been part of a confidential paper, which the modest author had, in the usual phrases, been persuaded by a few admiring friends to publish, and that in consequence a large edition would that very day be given to the world. Burke replied in a long epistle, thanking his lordship for his turning any part of his "attention towards a dejected old man, buried in the anticipated grave of a feeble old age, forgetting and forgotten, in an obscure and melancholy retreat;" but not hesitating to inform the noble author that if the plan of politics he recommended were adopted, and peace under his advice made, England would be completely ruined. "I find, my dear Lord," wrote Burke, "that you think that some persons who are not satisfied with the securities of a Jacobin peace, to be persons of intemperate minds. I may be, and I fear I am, with you in that description; but pray, my Lord, recollect that very few of the causes which make men intemperate can operate upon me. Sanguine hopes, vehement desires, inordinate ambition, implacable animosity, party attachments or party interests,—all these, with me, have no existence. For myself or for a family (alas! I have none) I have nothing to hope or to fear in this world."

In this melancholy language we find Burke almost in-

voluntarily contrasting his own desolate condition with that of his noble correspondent. Robert Eden, the first Earl of Auckland, was a model of worldly prosperity and domestic happiness. His peerage had been earned by many subserviencies ; but it had been earned ; and, surrounded by his nine children, six of whom were prepossessing daughters, though he had not yet, as he had still reason to hope, become the father-in-law of the Prime Minister, in appearance he was quite dignified and patriarchal. The world smiled upon him and upon his ; as it was natural it should do, since the graceful, affable, and conciliating nobleman had, in his public career, contrived to reflect very faithfully the ordinary opinions of the world. He had supported the American war and Lord North, when money and place were to be obtained by that disgraceful and impolitic contest. With his political leader he had joined the Coalition, when it seemed that the united legions of Fox and North could securely command the Treasury. He was the first public man to desert the Coalition, when he found that public opinion had declared itself against the unfortunate combination, and that after the general election of 1784, and the events of the subsequent session, Pitt was firmly established in power. His apostasy was so glaring and indefensible, that those whom he joined were heartily ashamed of him, and he gladly left England for France to negotiate the commercial treaty, covered with deserved obloquy indeed, but with a salary of six thousand pounds a year. From that time in lucrative employments both at home and abroad, he had steadily adhered to Pitt's fortunes. While that Minister pursued a pacific policy, Eden was the advocate of peace, trade, and economy. When the cry for war with Jacobin France rang throughout England, Eden,



as Lord Auckland, in his strong memorial to the States of Holland, fiercely reflected the general sentiment. As soon as this passion in certain questions began to cool, and it was supposed that even in high official circles there was a lurking desire for peace, he, in those Remarks of the Fourth Week of October, faithfully represented this rising feeling. At one time, as the petrel, his appearance indicated storm ; at another, as the swallow, he seemed to be the herald of sunshine and fine weather. He had no strong conviction in any cause. Duplicity and servility were written on his refined and intelligent features.\* Being by nature a slave, he had managed to drag along complacently with him a gilded chain.

How different had been Burke's career ! Between their public as well as private lives at the close of the hard autumn of 1795, there was a strong contrast. It is worth while for a moment to dwell on the two pictures. But, not perhaps to the credit of English literature and English literary men, there are some writers to whom Burke in his old age is not venerable, and to whom his earnest struggles and illustrious political career are without instruction ; and, unsatisfied with the manifold instances of generosity and self-sacrifice which his life displays, they have industriously looked through it only to search, though most vainly, for traces of mercenary and unscrupulous self-seeking, which would degrade him to the level of such men as this Robert Eden, Earl of Auckland, and which, in the case of such men as this nobleman, has indeed been passed over with little reprehension, and even much real approbation.

It was not because Lord Auckland's pamphlet was written with much skill and eloquence that Burke was so

\* See Wraxall's Posth. Mem., vol. i. p. 446.

highly alarmed at its contents. Knowing the character of the noble author, he justly thought that he must be sure of ministerial approbation before he would venture to give expression to such pacific sentiments. These prognostications he soon found, with dismay, to be only too correct. The very day after Lord Auckland wrote to Burke, Parliament met, and in the speech from the throne his Majesty threw out some gentle indications of a desire for peace. These were, in December, followed up by a direct message to the two Houses, declaring the King's readiness to agree to an honourable pacification; and of course a dutiful address, in similar terms, was returned by the Lords and Commons. It might have been expected that some prospects of a satisfactory negotiation had been held out by the French Directory before the Government pledged the Crown and Parliament to these pacific declarations; but this was far from being the case: Pitt seemed inclined to make peace with as little system and consideration as he had entered on the war.

Burke determined to make a public protest against such a peace as there was then any probability of being signed. He commenced a formal discussion of Lord Auckland's pamphlet in an eloquent and sarcastic letter, written with all his old spirit, animation, and energy, and triumphantly overthrowing the positions of the diplomatic author, who is treated, as an anonymous personage, with the scantiest courtesy and the happiest ridicule. This letter, the first written of the Letters on a Regicide Peace, was, owing to the circumstances which occurred as it was being composed, the last that was published, and in a fragmentary form, after Burke's death. It has been called the Fourth Letter of that brilliant series; but had

the author lived to publish it himself, it would certainly have been materially modified to adapt it to the place it now occupies. As it is, this Fourth Letter ought to be read first. It was his literary employment during the Christmas of 1795 and the January of 1796.

While busily engaged in this, the last of his great literary and political works, which assumed more importance as his mind worked upon it, he was surprised to find himself, shortly after the recess, again attacked by a noble Duke in the House of Lords. His assailant this time was not his Grace the Duke of Norfolk, but the Duke of Bedford, who, supported by the Earl of Lauderdale, found much to censure in the pension which Burke had recently received. His Grace was shocked. It seemed a kind of bargain and sale between Burke and the Ministers, and showed that they were all equally corrupt. It was wasting the public money. It was in direct contradiction to all the principles of economy which Burke had so long professed. Had he not brought in bills of economical reform? Had he not undertaken to prevent the Crown from granting large pensions without the consent of Parliament? How came it then that this West Indian Four-and-a-half per Cent. Fund had escaped his scrutiny, and that he was found himself the recipient of the profuse royal and ministerial bounty? Lord Grenville, in his usual manly style, came forward vigorously on the part of the Ministers in defence of Burke. The Duke of Bedford, indeed, had only given expression in the House of Lords to sentiments which had been loudly uttered in the democratic prints of the day: but there was much in the quarter from which it came, and the place in which it was made, that rendered the attack peculiarly ungracious and invidious.

Burke, putting aside for the moment the work he was writing, proposed to defend himself. He saw with the quick glance of the accomplished rhetorician the mark which his Grace of Bedford unconsciously presented, and he knew that he could hit it in the white. For himself personally indeed he cared little; but the attack made upon this tardy pension was really an attack made upon the funds provided for his creditors, and on the memory of his son. The reply was, as he said to Dr. Laurence, in "discharge of the debt I think due to my own and my son's memory, and to those who ought not to be considered prodigal in giving me what is beyond my merits, but not beyond my debts, as you know. The public—I won't dispute longer about it—has overpaid me. I wish I could overpay my creditors. They eat deep on what was designed to maintain me."\* To the most important point raised about the pension, that it was made on the authority of the Crown alone, and without the consent of Parliament, Burke could have given, so far as he himself was concerned, a ready and conclusive answer. He had not chosen the mode in which the grant was conferred. He had not fixed on the West Indian Four-and-a-half per Cents. When he had consented to accept the pension, he had been told from the highest authority that Parliament would be consulted; it was not his fault, and it was against his wishes that this course was not taken: all the rest was Pitt's doing. This however he could not say very well publicly. He had ample materials for his defence, without entering on the question as between himself and the Ministers.

Who was this grave and revered senator stepping for-

\* Laurence Correspondence, p. 43.

ward from his place in Parliament and denouncing the grant to an old veteran who had retired from the public service after twenty-seven years of the most laborious public exertions, and whose genius and attainments had never been surpassed by any statesman that ever fought and struggled in opposition or in Government? He was a young Duke, one of the wealthiest of the English nobility, professing liberal principles, in the full flush of his majority, the nephew of that Lord Keppel of whom Burke had been, in the hard season of his trial when his life and honour were at stake, the chosen counsellor and the most devoted friend; and, as making the matter still worse, this assailant was himself the heir to vast estates which had centuries before been given to his ancestor on no pretence of public service whatever, by Henry VIII. This was the man who was so indignant at the grant of Burke's pension in his old age; and, after defending himself, and showing that he had not contradicted the principles of economy he had professed, and that the pension was indeed strictly in accordance with every one of those principles, such are the topics on which Burke comments in his Letter to a Noble Lord, with the happiest ridicule, the keenest sarcasm, and some of the most powerful eloquence that he had ever displayed. All his faculties were fully roused by this outrage on good taste, as well as on the commonest notions of generosity and justice; they were all displayed throughout this wonderful piece of composition at the end of January and the beginning of February. The effect was such as must have astounded the respectable and wealthy but dull and commonplace Duke who provoked the attack: and while this Letter has ever since remained the admiration of the whole reading world, Burke's memory has

never been forgiven for it by any one bearing the family name of Russell.

Yet the provocation he received had been great ; and admirable as the literary merits of the work are, just as with the similar though less elaborate Letter to William Elliot, Esq., of the preceding year, so little anxious was Burke to publish it, that he thought at first of only having forty copies struck off, as his justification to his personal friends. But as though he was not to be allowed to remain quiet, the Duke of Bedford's ally, the Earl of Lauderdale, gave notice of a motion on the grant of the pension ; and again thought fit to bring the West Indian Four-and-a-half per Cents. before the House of Lords. Burke determined to print a larger edition of the Letter, and offer the whole world the opportunity of judging between himself and his noble assailants.\* It was well that he did so ; for it began to be reported that the Letter was only to be shown about in ministerial and courtly circles, and afterwards, in an underhand way, and as if without his sanction, to be surreptitiously given to the world. The appearance of this pamphlet, which began to be generally talked of, could alone silence Burke's vile slanderers, and prove that there was nothing in it he was either ashamed of, or afraid to publish under the sanction of his name.

He remained quietly at Beaconsfield, anxious for the health of his wife, who had suddenly another severe attack of her old complaint, the rheumatism, in her legs, while Dr. Laurence, in London, corrected the proof-sheets and superintended their passage through the press. The sheets were also, of course, carefully read by Windham ; and Burke had the benefit of his refined criticism. The

\* See the Preface to the Posthumous Works, vol. v.

sensitive Secretary-at-War objected to the expression, "One language for a gracious benefactor, another for a proud and insulting foe." He was afraid that Burke would lay himself open to misrepresentation from the Jacobins, who might accuse him of being a man of double tongue, and using opposite languages for the same thing. Burke, when told of this criticism by Dr. Laurence, was far from agreeing with it, and asked, "Can anything in the world be more common than to use disqualifying phrases with regard to your friends when they are treating you with kindness, and to use the very contrary to enemies that crush you? — 'I don't deserve, my dear Laurence, that you should take all this trouble for me in the midst of your pressing business' — would this be a proper answer for those who should say I was unworthy of having this done?"\* The expression was however slightly altered before publication, and finally stood, "One *style* to a gracious benefactor, another to a proud and insulting foe." Laurence, busy as he was in the Prerogative Court, Doctors' Commons, and in the Court of Admiralty, incessantly read the proofs, corrected the punctuation, and corresponded with Burke about phrases day by day, as the sheets were being struck off. Some of the learned civilian's clients would not have been pleased, on seeing him, in his old wig and gown, bending over his papers in court, and, as they imagined, carefully watching over their interests, if they had known that when he looked the gravest and seemed most absorbed just before rising to speak, he was really correcting a proof of the Letter to a Noble Lord, or hurriedly writing a note to Burke on the subject in order to be in time to save the post.

\* Laurence Correspondence, p. 42.

Another correspondent, almost as interested in the Letter to a Noble Lord as Dr. Laurence, was the good, the amiable, the beautiful Mrs. Crewe. Her lively letters to Burke and his wife in their solitude, always at this time, as in previous years, gave them great delight. Against her own and her husband's friends, she was still ready to fight Burke's battles and gracefully stand by his colours. After the publication of the work, and the rapid sale of three editions, one after the other, as fast as they could be printed, amid the enthusiastic approbation of the public a few of the Duke of Bedford's friends and Fox's partisans began to criticize vehemently the image of the whale which occupies so prominent a part in the Letter. They affirmed that Burke's description was inaccurate, and that the blubber and fins of a whale could not be correctly referred to as being visible while the ponderous creature was supinely floating in the deep. Having little else to say, they gravely pronounced him ignorant of the nature of whales. Mrs. Crewe however gaily defended all parts of the description, and called Windham to her aid. In reply to her account of the controversies she had on the matter, Burke pleasantly remarked: "As to you, you are in a worse situation than the dependants on insolent great ladies. They swallow nothing but toads, but you who pay court to us scribblers must swallow whales, blubber and all. To a lady of Greenland, however, this would be no penalty. You were in the right to appeal to Windham. He is the only gentleman in England who ever was on a whale fishery. He knows how to stick a harpoon in their blubber better than any one. However his stomach could not stand the blubber-ship, and he got on shore in Norway."\*

\* Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 335.



Another objection that has occasionally been urged is of a more serious nature. It has been said that the account given of the Duke of Bedford's ancestry is not quite correct; and to refute it apparently some rather heavy Memoirs of the House of Russell were published after the passing of the Reform Bill. Burke did not pretend to be an antiquary; and he disclaimed in the strongest manner any intention of being a family chronicler. In the main features and for all the purposes of his argument, his statement of the noble duke's ancestry cannot be questioned. But though it could be shown that no ancestor of the Duke of Bedford had anything to do with making a dishonourable peace with France, surrendering the fortress of Boulogne, or being implicated, as the indignant and eloquent old man insinuates, in the butchery of the Duke of Buckingham, this would not, as a devoted champion of Bedford House and Holland House afterwards declared in the *Edinburgh Review*, prove Burke to be "that accomplished but malignant libeller."\* There was nothing in his nature, as his most inveterate detractors have admitted, either malignant or libellous. If the young Duke of Bedford thought it becoming to accuse him of improper motives in his old age, it was surely excusable in Burke to comment in reply, even with some degree of severity, on what his Grace's own ancestors were supposed to have done in the reign of Henry VIII.

Some critics have indeed expressed their surprise that, prostrate as he was with grief, so much asperity should have been incorporated by Burke into this brilliant defence. But it was the grief itself that produced the bitterness. It was the sad contrast between his own deso-

\* See *Edinburgh Review*, vol. lviii. p. 317.

late condition and the position of his noble accuser that made him write with asperity on those who thought fit to make ungenerous attacks upon him in his retirement and misery. He was miserable indeed. This was no mere rhetoric, as is too well known. Broken-hearted and dying, he was a ruin : and yet, as every sentence of this Letter to a Noble Lord illustrates, what a magnificent ruin ! Who can look without awe and reverence on this old man at Beaconsfield, so lonely and so weary, with such lofty thoughts, such brilliant fancies, such burning words ? With one foot in the grave, to which he was looking fondly for rest, he still turned to the world which he was quitting, a glance as earnest and impassioned as ever. Though his heart was broken, it seemed to have obeyed the poet's law and never to have grown old. Though despairing himself, he taught others not to despair ; and in his darkest hours spoke the language of inextinguishable hope and lofty consolation. When his constitution was undermined, his health broken by age, disease, labour, and sorrow, and the prospect around him withered and barren, his imagination appeared to grow warmer and younger than ever ; and the most splendid poetic visions, which are generally regarded as the attendants of youth, health, and hope, gathered around him in his closing few sad and painful days. It was a remarkable spectacle ; such as the world has seldom seen ; such as many generations may pass away before it shall see, in the same completeness, the like again. To the last his wonderful mind seemed almost overwhelmed with visions, brighter than those which

"Youthful poets dream  
On summer eves by haunted stream."

His practical benevolence was at the same time as ac-

tive as the most brilliant of his mental faculties. As he was composing the Letter to the Duke of Bedford, he was also busily engaged in pushing forward a philanthropic scheme, which interested and soothed the last months of his life. One of the most painful circumstances of the French Revolution was the condition of the children of the emigrants who were fighting against the Republic, in the pay of England. Many of the descendants of gentlemen and noblemen were left to grow up in wretchedness and poverty, surrounded by the worst associates in the most crowded and miserable lanes and alleys in London. The condition of these unhappy children had long occupied Burke's thoughts; and his mind had been often disturbed by reflecting what their fate was likely to be, thus from their earliest years brought up without education and in close contact with the lowest vice and wickedness. If they should ever be restored to France, they would from their previous habits and their evil associates be quite disqualified from filling that place in society to which they were born. If their exile was to be perpetual, by being inured to infamy and crime they would only, like some of the children of the poorest English people, grow up to afford a harvest for the gaol, the transport-ship, and the gallows. After much meditation Burke conceived a plan which might save many of these young victims of the Revolution from the wretched destiny that seemed otherwise inevitable. The English Government already allowed the French emigrants, who had no other resources, a guinea a month for the maintenance of each child. The Ministers had also, two years before, rented old General Haviland's house at Penn, about three miles and a half north-west of Beaconsfield, for the abode for some of the superior French

clergy. It had however never yet been occupied, and remained empty. Burke thought that, as the house was large, and could accommodate sixty boys and their tutors without inconvenience, the guinea a month already paid for each boy, with other fifty pounds a month, and the advance of a thousand pounds to furnish with, this old mansion might, under his superintendence, be made into a most valuable school for the education of sixty of those poor, friendless outcasts, many of whose fathers and most of whose relations had fallen in arms against the French republic. The advance of money was not great, the object most beneficial, and the result under proper management sure to be most gratifying. He drew up a proposal to be transmitted to Pitt, through the Marquis of Buckingham, undertaking himself to carry out every arrangement on being assured of the specified sums, to be paid in regular instalments out of the army extraordinaries; and he offered to be accountable for the proper discharge of his office to the Marquis of Buckingham, the Duke of Portland, and Lord Grenville, as trustees.\*

To effect this object he set in motion a machinery which it was scarcely possible to resist. His neighbour, the Marquis of Buckingham, was Pitt's own relative, and his recommendation was likely to have great weight. His friend Windham, the Secretary-at-war, heartily endeavoured to promote the plan. The Duke of Portland told Burke that there could be no difficulty, and that he might consider the matter settled. The humane Mrs. Crewe, on visiting her friend Mrs. Burke, whose health was still precarious, was interested in the scheme, and promised in support of it to use all the influence she

\* See Proposals by the Right Hon. Edmund Burke, relative to the Penn School. Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 338.

had so deservedly acquired in almost every quarter. But official routine was a stubborn thing. The weeks of February and March passed on, and the business was not completed. Mrs. Crewe still urged Burke to write to everybody until the dead weight of obstruction was removed. He was however fairly tired out. In reply to his fair correspondent, he said, "What! with all these dukes, marquises, cabinet-ministers, secretaries of state, and secretaries-at-war, cast-off lord lieutenants of Ireland and their secretaries—cannot this miserable little affair of fifty pounds a month be done between them; with the aid too of all the lady marchionesses and lady knights of the shire?"\* On one of the last days in March, however, the Marquis of Buckingham received a very terse letter, signed W. Pitt, stating that "No difficulty occurs respecting Mr. Burke's school," and that the grant might without his having any further trouble originate with the Treasury. As soon as this ministerial fiat was received Burke set about the preparations for the establishment with his usual energy and industry; and the month of April had not closed before the school was formally opened.

He acted with the greatest judgment in all the proceedings about the appointment both of pupils and tutors. Being determined that the design of the institution should be fully attained, and that not the slightest taint of jobbery should approach it, he scrupulously consulted the most distinguished French emigrants on all the details of a business which in reality was their own more than that of any Englishman. For himself he resolved at the beginning not to present a single boy as a scholar; and in this manner avoided all impor-

\* Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 334.

tunities for his patronage, and strengthened his authority to control the appointments of others and see that the most fitting objects for the charity were selected. Children who had had their fathers or near relations killed in the war, were the especial objects of his preference; the boys all wore a blue uniform and a hat with a white cockade, and a label inscribed "Vive le Roi;" but those who had only lost an uncle had the motto placed on a black ground, while others who had sustained the still more serious loss of a father had the words written on a significant red one. Burke was regarded by both pupils and scholars as the father of the institution, and as such was publicly alluded to in a Latin oration on the day of the only annual distribution of prizes which Providence permitted him to see. In return he regarded the school with parental interest, and spoke of it "as supplying the void in my own family, and being my only comfort."\* He rode over to Penn daily, and sometimes twice a day. His appearance was always welcome both to scholars and masters. He supplied them with provisions from his kitchen and garden; and even was ready to deprive his own table of the most indispensable dishes for the gratification of the boys, whom he wished to taste delicacies to which they had been accustomed in their own country, but which their disastrous fate had for some years not permitted them even to behold. This desire sometimes occasioned ludicrous contests between himself and his old housekeeper, who was anxious for the honour of the family table; and of the struggle between them some ludicrous anecdotes have been told, which are however evidently exaggerated. It is very unlikely that the devoted Mrs. Webster, who had been accustomed to

\* Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 380.

her master's hospitality to French people for so many years, and who knew what deep interest he took in providing for their comfort, would think, in his presence, of tossing up her head and sneering at the notion of giving things away "to French people, indeed!"\*

He added a codicil to his will, recommending the school at Penn to his political friends. He requested them to use their influence with Pitt to prevail upon him to continue the necessary allowance for the education of "those unhappy children of meritorious parents;" recorded his wish that the establishment should be placed under the immediate care and superintendence of Dr. Walker King and Dr. Laurence; and hoped that as the boys grew up means of employment might be found for them in the military and other services, as best suited their dispositions and capacities. Their training was of course, like that of most French boys, principally military. The Marquis of Buckingham kindly presented them with some brass cannon and a pair of colours. Burke delighted to watch them defiling amid the leafy glades round Penn in all their mimic array, with the pride, pomp, and circumstance of war. Those joyful young hearts, unsaddened by the past, ignorant of the future, knew little of the causes which made that noble old man watch them with so much interest. The summer sun shone splendidly; the woods were gay in their green luxuriance; above and around all nature was joyful: but as the venerable protector of that band of boyish infantry kindly glanced upon them, passing gaily along, he had a heart broken by much grief, a brow overburdened by many memories; and his hours were numbered.

It was at this time that, on walking one day in his grounds, the old horse which his son had been accus-

\* Prior, p. 435.

tomed to ride, and which Burke had turned out to grass on Richard's death, came voluntarily up to him, and after a careful inspection and evident recognition, deliberately laid his head upon his bosom. The sight of the animal always deeply affected Burke; but he was quite overcome by the extraordinary demonstration on the part of the poor quadruped, that seemed anxious to share his sorrow for him whom they had both lost. Burke was quite overcome, and throwing his arms round the horse's neck, rent the air with his cries of grief.

The incident was truly painfully affecting. In London it gave rise to reports that he had gone mad. He had been spoken of as insane many times before; but now it appeared that his mental condition was unequivocal. He was, as it was said, wandering about his park kissing his cows and horses. One nobleman even left town and went to Beaconsfield expressly to satisfy himself of the truth. He found Burke much as usual; but thought that his host might be on that day in one of his lucid intervals. Wishing to have stronger evidence he turned the conversation on public affairs, and was shown several brilliant pages of the *Letters on a Regicide Peace* which Burke was then writing. The noble visitor was at length fully convinced that his friend was still all himself, and the rumours that had been propagated entirely incorrect. Before taking leave, he mentioned what he had heard to Mrs. Burke, and received from her the true explanation of what had actually occurred. Burke afterwards mentioned to Laurence the circumstances of this visit, and the reports of madness which it seemed were prevalent. "As to your madness," replied the learned civilian, "it is just as real as that of Democritus,—it is your folly to be alone wise."\*

\* Laurence Correspondence, p. 49.



The Letters on a Regicide Peace were advertised early in the summer; but the Ministry having really opened some kind of negotiation, through Mr. Wickham, our minister in Switzerland, and through the King of Prussia, Burke determined to enter more elaborately into the question, and to make two separate publications of the work. Windham, though from his official position ostensibly supposed to concur in Pitt's pacific overtures, really agreed with Burke on the impolicy of any peace at such a time, and made several hasty visits to Beaconsfield for the purpose of urging the speedy issue of the Letters, which he and Laurence, from what they had read of them in the proofs, believed to be equal, if not superior to anything Burke had ever written.

Several causes however prevented the book from appearing as early as the two friends desired. Burke's health was not what it had been. Anxiety and sorrow were doing their work. The remnants of the once happy household at Beaconsfield were sorrowing invalids. Mrs. Burke was able again to take her place in the dining-parlour; but she could seldom take exercise except in a carriage, and her rheumatism was still very troublesome. William Burke too was lame, and though he managed to hobble about with a stick, his life was not worth six months' purchase. Burke, though he would occasionally rouse himself, and to please others talk with his usual spirit, was always more depressed than ever after such an exertion. He slept badly at night, he was drowsy in the daytime, and he saw scarcely any strangers but the French people who came down to visit the school at Penn. "For the sake of that," he said, "I submit to see some who are still more miserable than I am." A letter to an Irish gentleman, John Geohegan, with whom he had

been long acquainted, and whose daughter had married the son of Montesquieu, gives a picture of the resources of his envied domestic establishment at this time when he has been represented as living like a nobleman. Mr. Geohegan had intended bringing down on a visit his son, the French baron, and another gentleman. Burke wrote: "It was as part of an old friend that I, who refuse all new acquaintances, took the liberty of desiring him to accompany you; our house has very little lodging-room, and it is all we could do to lodge you two. Our settled family takes up four beds, and my old friend Dr. Walker King, whom I have not seen for a good while, and whom I am not likely to see for this year again, we expect here with his wife and child. We have not a bed for a third person, so that I must deny myself for the present (and it is a real self-denial) the worthy and most respectable gentleman you propose to accompany yourself and your son the baron. Alas! my dear friend, I am not what I was two years ago. Society is too much for my nerves."\*

In the weakened and depressed state of his health and spirits, there was one subject which affected Burke perhaps more than it might in other circumstances have done. As soon as Hastings had retired from the bar at Westminster Hall he and his friends raised a cry for compensation. He had been, in their estimation and his own, cruelly wronged and injured; his fortune had been spent in defending himself from a prosecution which the House of Commons had voted; he had at length been acquitted by the House of Lords; ought not his costs to be paid by those who had the control of the public purse, and himself placed in the same pecuniary position as

\* Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 349

when the impeachment began? The East India Company was willing enough to grant him a pension of five thousand a year; but this was not what Hastings wanted. It was not for the Company to reward him, it was for the nation to compensate him. Pitt and Dundas had, however, no intention of proposing a Parliamentary grant, and were in no great hurry to give the ministerial sanction of the Board of Control to the pension which the Court of Proprietors had voted in the May of 1795. At last, however, a kind of compromise was effected between the Directors of the East India Company and the advisers of the Crown. In the March of 1796 it was announced that Hastings was to have an annuity of four thousand a year for twenty-eight years and a half, beginning in June, 1785, and that in consideration of the debts he had contracted the Company was to lend him, for eighteen years and without interest, fifty thousand pounds. This was really a munificent allowance, though granted in a most peculiar way. It was about fifteen times the amount of public money Burke received in the whole course of his life. Bountiful however as this was, it did not satisfy Hastings, and he had subsequently on more than one occasion to apply to the Company for relief. Yet there are people who can see nothing in Hastings's pecuniary transactions to blame, who can accuse Burke of prodigality and corruption.

The thanks of the Commons was all the reward Burke had received for undertaking the impeachment. In that business he had been their servant, and he was much annoyed when he learnt that the Government had given their sanction to the grant from the East India Company. It seemed absurd to vote an impeachment, to thank the Managers solemnly for the manner in which they

had conducted that impeachment, and then to agree to a large pecuniary allowance to the man who had been impeached. Burke considered the Minister's assent to Hastings's pension as a kind of censure upon the Managers of the impeachment, and a practical contradiction. He wrote strong letters to the Lord Chancellor and to the Speaker. He thought even of presenting a petition to the House of Commons; but was for the moment dissuaded by his friends Dr. Laurence and Lord Fitzwilliam, from taking a step which would certainly be misconstrued.

Burke, however, was fully able to protect his own reputation. On his retirement from public life he had the intention of writing the History of the Impeachment, and it will ever remain a subject of deep regret that he was not permitted to execute this design. Laurence was to have been his assistant in the work; and no man was better fitted, from his knowledge of the details and the interest he took in the subject, to co-operate in that great work. Young Richard's death, and the sorrow which the loss occasioned, prevented Burke from proceeding with that task. Other matters of more immediate interest, such as the Catholic question and the overtures for peace with the French Directory, employed most of the hours in which he found himself capable of study and composition. The grant of the pension to Hastings awoke him from the apparent supineness into which he had fallen respecting this business, which he had so repeatedly affirmed to be the most important of his life. He felt the necessity of doing something. Since he could not, according to the representations of his friends, interfere successfully in Parliament, it was still more imperative that he should do something with his pen. That weapon was more potent than the tongue of Pitt or Fox in the

House of Commons, and could influence in all times majorities which those great orators could never hope to sway. Laurence saw that all the voluminous books and papers on the question were collected, and sent down to Beaconsfield. An abstract of the evidence, Burke's speeches, and an introductory history written by himself, were all in contemplation. A verbatim report of his speeches was procured from Mr. Gurney, the short-hand reporter, and Burke had already made some progress in revising them, and preparing them for the press, when, early in July, he was suddenly arrested in his labour by an attack of illness the most serious he had ever experienced.

He was seized with acute spasms. The stomach refused to perform its functions. He became fearfully emaciated. It seemed that he could scarcely hope for a few weeks of life. His medical attendants, among whom was of course the benevolent Dr. Brocklesby, recommended him at once to proceed to Bath and drink the waters as his sole means of recovery ; and to Bath, accompanied by his wife and his friend William, Burke went in the third week of July. At first the waters did him no perceptible good. His strength daily declined ; his emaciation increased ; his clothes hung like mere rags on his limbs. He gave up all hopes of recovery, and prepared himself to die. His only regret was that he was about to leave that work on the Impeachment, which he felt to be so necessary for his reputation, not only incomplete, but scarcely even begun.

Under the sense of impending death, he addressed from his couch at Bath, on the twenty-eighth of the month, a solemn letter to his friend Laurence. Every word deserves attention. It shows the spirit in which the great statesman and philosopher lived and moved,

and what his thoughts were when, as he believed, he felt upon him the hand of death. "As through the whole of a various and long life," he wrote, "I have been more indebted than thankful to Providence, so I am now singularly so in being dismissed, as hitherto I appear to be, so gently from life, and sent to follow those who in course ought to have followed me, whom I trust I shall yet in some inconceivable manner see and know, and by whom I shall be seen and known. But enough of this.

"However, as it is possible that my stay on this side of the grave may yet be shorter than I compute it, let me now beg to call to your recollection the solemn charge and trust I gave you on my departure from the public stage. I fancy I must make you the sole operator in a work in which, even if I were enabled to undertake it, you must have been ever the assistance on which alone I could rely. Let not this cruel, daring, unexampled act of public corruption, guilt and meanness go down to a posterity perhaps as careless as the present race, without its due animadversion, which will be best found in its own acts and monuments. Let my endeavours to save the nation from that shame and guilt be my monument—the only one I ever will have. Let everything I have done, said, or written, be forgotten but this. I have struggled with the great and the little on this point during the greater part of my active life, and I wish, after death, to have my defiance of the judgments of those who consider the dominion of the glorious empire given by an incomprehensible dispensation of the Divine Providence into our hands as not being more than an opportunity of gratifying, for the lowest of their purposes, the lowest of their passions,

and that for such poor rewards and, for the most part, indirect and silly bribes as indicate even more the folly than the corruption of these infamous and contemptible wretches. I blame myself exceedingly for not having employed the last year in this work, and beg forgiveness of God for such a neglect. I had strength enough for it, if I had not wasted some of it in compromising grief with drowsiness and forgetfulness, and employing some of the moments in which I have been roused to mental exertion in feeble endeavours to rescue this dull and thoughtless people from the punishments which their neglect and stupidity will bring upon them for their systematic iniquity and oppression. But you are made to continue all that is good in me, and to augment it with the various resources of a mind fertile in virtues, and cultivated with every sort of talent and of knowledge. Above all, make out the cruelty of this pretended acquittal, but in reality this barbarous and inhuman condemnation of whole tribes and nations and of all the classes they contain. If ever Europe recovers its civilisation, that work will be useful. Remember! Remember! Remember!”\*

Is this solely rhetoric spoken on the edge of the grave? Those only can think so who would sneer all virtue, sincerity, and nobleness out of the world.

But the death, which Burke so steadily contemplated, did not at that time occur. For the first fortnight of his stay in Bath, it indeed seemed that the hour of his dissolution was fast approaching: his stomach continued to be violently agitated, his emaciation increased, and his strength visibly declined. Then the progress of his disease appeared to be interrupted, and he began to feel a

\* Laurence Correspondence, p. 53.

little better. He looked on this prospect of returning health with the same submissive equanimity as he had regarded his impending decease. "It looks," he said, "as if Providence, for some wise ends, relating to my own better preparation for death, or for some services to those who are near and dear to me, was resolved to continue me here something longer than I looked for." As soon as he felt this improvement in his health, Burke was anxious to set off homeward; but his wife had scarcely been able to take the waters at all, from the necessity of being constantly in attendance upon himself; and that she might have the benefit of this favourite medicinal remedy of the time, Burke remained at Bath until the middle of September. William Burke was also with them, in a state of bodily health scarcely better than that of Burke himself, and his mental condition certainly very much more deplorable.

"Poor Will," wrote Burke to Laurence, "is rather more feeble in his limbs; in other respects, in the way you saw him. What there is of him is very much yours."\*

Some of the first hours of convalescence during Burke's stay at Bath, were employed in promoting an object which he and his son Richard, when dying, had at heart. This was to get their friend Dr. Laurence returned to Parliament. Though their wish to see him elected for Malton had not been accomplished, an opening was at length afforded in the borough of Peterborough, which, like Malton, was under the influence of Lord Fitzwilliam. Burke had the pleasure of enclosing his noble friend's offer to the learned civilian at Doctors' Commons, and satisfactory arrangements were made for Laurence to

\* Laurence Correspondence, p. 58.



enter Parliament in the session that would soon begin. Burke gave him his most hearty congratulations on the prospect. "Long," said he, "may you serve the nation, professionally, parliamentarily; and long may you have a nation existing to serve: Mrs. Burke joins cordially in these wishes." And again, some weeks later, when the business was finally settled, these congratulations were renewed. "May your days be many! may they be important! may they be happy! This will make a full amends to me for the fewness, insignificance, and unhappiness of mine!"

The first duty Burke, assisted, as usual, by the faithful and assiduous Laurence, set himself to perform, after returning from Bath, was, early in the autumn, to bring out the first two Letters on a Regicide Peace. They had been delayed all the spring and summer, at first through his vexation at the grant of Hastings's pension with the consent of the Board of Control, and afterwards through the severe attack of illness which had made him despair of his life. As month after month elapsed, and the Letters, which had been long advertised, did not make their appearance, of course malignant rumours about the cause of this delay were set in circulation by the Opposition. It was reported in London that Burke had suppressed the work, in gratitude to the Ministers for their defence of himself and his pension from the attacks of the Duke of Bedford and the Earl of Lauderdale. He had never less intention of suppressing any production; but he knew well that if he consulted his own peace and quiet, it would have been better for him to refrain from publishing, in his season of old age and ill health, a work which ran counter both to the sentiments of the Opposition and the policy of the Mi-

nistry. He called it the forlorn hope, and as the sheets were passing through the press, remarked to his friend and assistant, Laurence, "I am afraid I have been guilty of a great folly,—in extreme age, infirmity, and debility, in the jaws almost of death, to encounter the whole power of the world, both at home and abroad."

Of course Laurence corrected the proof-sheets and superintended all the details of publication. This occupation, with the corrections and additions which the first Letter required to adapt it to the state of affairs at the time, employed the three first weeks in October. The Ministers, notwithstanding many rebuffs, and without the slightest possible encouragement, had persevered in their overtures for peace; and the distinguished diplomatist and adherent of the old Whig party, Lord Malmesbury, who had gone over to the ranks of the Government with the Duke of Portland, was just being sent forth on his ill-advised mission to Paris. Burke's Letters, which even in the advertisement stigmatized any such peace as was then contemplated by the epithet of Regicide, were most anxiously expected. Laurence worked by day and night at the proofs, and his diligence was not uncalled for, Burke's corrections being of course endless, and his changes and additions, as the sheets were sent to him, most abundant. The following note from Laurence to Burke, on the thirteenth of October, shows us the learned doctor busy at his task, and pleasantly exhibits the relations of the two friends as the great work was on the point of being issued from the press:—"The three first (or the first three) half-sheets are worked off. Two more I have now sent, but one intermediate half-sheet I have kept back for your approbation of a slight addition which I have made. In p. 30 (half-sheet E) you have inter-

polated a short passage. You say, 'Let me add, that if our Government perseveres in its uniform course of acting under instruments with such preambles, it pleads guilty,' etc. etc. I have ventured to soften it a little by introducing a parenthesis :—'Let me add—and it is with unfeigned anxiety for the credit and character of the Ministry that I do add—if our Government,' etc. etc. If you do not like these, insert any other words of personal civility to something of the same effect, and let me have them. By having kept that half-sheet back, I do not delay the press at all, only no words must be added or taken away, so as to disturb the whole setting of the half-sheet. In the same half-sheet, p. 31, are the words, 'ogling and glances of fraternity. Lest this coquetting,' etc. etc. I am afraid here was something of an incestuous passion imputed to Britannia; I have put a feebler word, 'tenderness,' instead of fraternity. If you can think of a better word, let me have it." Both of these alterations by Laurence, Burke permitted to remain. It is worthy of observation by those who think that he was at this time prepared to become subservient to the Ministers, that the words of personal civility to them were in reality suggested by his friend, and that the entire series of these Letters, as well as everything that Burke ever wrote either before or after the grant of his pension, and on the whole subject of the French Revolution and the administration of the war against the French Jacobins and their successors, the Directory, was just as much and as decidedly opposed to the policy adopted by the Ministry, as to the course recommended by the Opposition.

As the work was on the point of appearing, an unpleasant circumstance occurred, of which the tendency was

to deprive the most popular and brilliant political writer of the time of the profits accruing to him from the publication of this, one of his most popular and brilliant works. Since the retirement of Dodsley, Burke had employed a publisher of the name of Owen, whose shop was situated in Piccadilly. To him had been entrusted the manuscript of the Letter to a Noble Lord for publication, but though several editions of that pamphlet had been sold off, Owen had sent in no account. As the two Letters on a Regicide Peace were about to appear, he was asked by Dr. King, on the part of his illustrious friend, to make a return of the gains arising from the Bedford Letter. This, however, he positively refused to do, alleging as his excuse that Burke had given him the pamphlet to publish for his own emolument. Burke denied the fact, and this denial was quite sufficient with any honourable mind. Since, however, Owen steadily persisted in returning no account, or refunding any of the profits of the recent work, the publication of the Letters on a Regicide Peace was at the last moment taken out of his hands and given to Mr. Rivington, whose descendants have continued, as publishers, up to our time to be associated with the authorized editions of Burke's works and letters. Vexed, however, at having the new work taken from him at the moment of publication, Owen determined to publish an edition for himself, and the fellow had the audacity to avow, and attempt to justify, his conduct in a preface, in which he impudently declared that as the manuscript had in the first instance been entrusted to him for publication, he had a perfect right, with or without the author's consent, to publish it. This was certainly, as it was pronounced at the time by the most respectable literary journals, one

of the most shameless and daring acts of piracy ever committed in the history of publishing.

The rival editions of the two Letters on a Regicide Peace appeared within a few days of each other. Burke went up to town, as he said, "to swear at his little great rogue of a publisher." The aid of the Court of Chancery was invoked, and an injunction obtained. Burke had, however, but little redress. Owen attempted to insult him in an abusive advertisement. The old statesman felt and complained bitterly of the delays of the Court over which Loughborough then presided. This trifling affair could not in months be brought to a conclusion, and Burke was in his grave before Owen could be compelled to refund his ill-gotten gains.\*

The revised edition of the two Letters on a Regicide Peace was published almost on the very day, the twenty-second of October, when Lord Malmesbury was entering Paris on his unfortunate mission. They pointed out to the English people the impossibility of concluding any honourable peace on the terms which the French Directory had laid down, and the result speedily confirmed all Burke's eloquent misgivings. Merely, however, to demonstrate the impossibility of attaining satisfactory conditions for bringing the contest to a close, was but a small portion of his object in publishing those celebrated compositions; all the powers of his genius were called forth to invoke the national spirit of his countrymen and encourage them to continue the war. The effect was immense. The people responded almost unanimously to his splendid exhortations, and went far beyond their rulers in their conception of the necessity and importance of the great conflict they were waging, and which Burke told them,

\* See Laurence Correspondence, p. 157.

in the most prophetic and fervid language that ever came from a mortal pen, they would for so many years have still to wage against the gigantic military power which had emerged from the tomb of the murdered French monarchy. In all the richest qualities of the genius which had so long been the delight and admiration of every one who took any interest in English politics, or had any appreciation of English eloquence, this, the last of Burke's writings, was pronounced fully equal to the best of the productions of his younger and, as his enemies said, his better days. The energy of that mind which seemed to triumph so proudly over sorrow, weakness, and disease, and display the most brilliant powers of oratory, fancy, and philosophic wisdom, even at the moment when the author was sinking into the tomb, was nothing less than wonderful. Read and re-read as these extraordinary Letters may be, and contrasted with Burke's own unhappy condition, if the evidence was not unmistakably presented before us, it would seem almost impossible that they could be the composition of a heartbroken old man whose vital powers were ebbing away. Genius seems to break the confines of death and the grave, and the mind of the author is almost overpowered with its vast conceptions, which are poured forth in the exalted strains of the prophet and with all the richest imagery of the poet. We are inclined to think of the Shakspearian image of the swan, "dying in music." But with all this gorgeous rhetoric, and fullness of illustration, the gigantic reasoning powers of the author are equally displayed, and in the statesmanlike grasp of the subject, and depth of the reflections which pervades them, these Letters have never been rivalled. From that opening sentence in which the reader is told that, "to a people who have

once been proud and great, and great because they were proud, a change in the national spirit is the most terrible of all revolutions," throughout these two Letters, and their two successors, which Burke did not live to give to the world, the observations which fall from his pen surprise even the most careless, not only by their force, but by the generality of their application. Their irresistible truth strikes the mind with all the surprise of a paradox, and we feel in perusing them, as in many of the profound reflections of Shakspeare, that they were true when the author wrote them, and, whatever revolutions the world may undergo, will be true in all time.

Commencing, in the authorized edition, with some beautiful thoughts on the vicissitudes of empires and the circumstances influencing their growth and decay, Burke proceeds to remark on the effeminate spirit which was supposed to have become characteristic of the English people at the beginning of the Seven Years' War, and of which the absurdity could be shown by the glory and success that followed a season of defeat and disaster. The application was evident. Again, following a series of ill-successes on the Continent, there was a season of desponding; but he assures the people that they were only at the beginning of a long war, which might, under proper auspices and with wiser counsels, yet be closed in triumph. He again and again inculcates the peculiar nature of the contest they were then engaged in; shows how utterly the war had been mismanaged, and how it might in the field be retrieved; while such conditions as the French Directory would impose must put a fatal seal on the public calamities. He recapitulates the galling insults with which the organs of the French Government had met Pitt's overtures for peace; comments on their extrava-

gant declarations, and shows the impossibility of keeping any terms with a power that arrogantly presumed to make natural boundaries, and not international law or rights of treaties, the only proper limits of its empire. Why should England submit to the great humiliation of receiving the law from a foreign Government acting on doctrines which, in fact, meant war with the civilized world? To encourage his countrymen, Burke reminds them what their ancestors had done in resisting the arms of Louis the Fourteenth; and the historical picture of William the Third and his council, and of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Montagu, accompanied by the Lord Mayor, going from shop to shop to borrow money to carry on the war, illustrates the situation of England at that day more vividly and presents the King in a nobler and truer light than any page which the great historian who has just gone from among us has written on the reign of his favourite Dutch hero. In a noble strain of eloquence, in which the aged author succeeds in affecting the reader as powerfully as any orator that ever addressed an audience, he comments on the high spirit of the English policy, which at that time had made the people great, and presents it in startling contrast with the pusillanimous counsels of the day. With a vigorous hand he then lays bare the anatomy of the Jacobin republic, showing how studiously corrupt its morals were, and how dangerous the permanent establishment of such a power in the heart of Europe must be to all the rest of the world.

The second Letter portrays this Power in arms for the destruction of its neighbours. He points out with great ability and consummate logical power that the aggression which alarmed all Europe had been designed long before the great outbreak called the French Revolution;



that Montesquieu's *Grandeur et Décadence des Romains* had shown, in the systematic proceedings of the Roman Senate, the way of aggression for French ambition ; that the pretensions Germany and England were called upon to oppose struck at nothing less than the independence of all Europe. He again examines the conduct of the war, shows that it never had been a war of alliance, and that, according to the manner in which it had been waged, it was impossible for it to succeed. He once more sketches his own plan of hostilities, and proves, as far as such a question was capable of demonstration, the superiority of the course he had for three years vainly recommended to attain the object the combined Powers professed to have in view. He unmasks the selfish schemes which were really at the bottom of all their disinterested declarations, and very unequivocally indicates that they had only themselves to blame for the disasters that had ensued.

From the system of war, he comes to the system of peace. Unrolling the political map of the world, he clearly demonstrates that at such a time no peace could be made by England except on conditions which would be absolutely ruinous. France would under such a pacification be greater and stronger than ever ; with her aggressive schemes, which the Revolution had only developed, all in a state of forwardness, and with a genius and character utterly hostile to all her neighbours and the liberty and independence of the world. Every page of this second Letter abounds in matter worthy of the deepest meditation ; at once historical and suggestive, it establishes unmistakably how little there was really wild and extravagant in Burke's views on this great question of peace or war with this armed French Revolution, and even at the present day the work may be read with as much

profit and instruction as at the time when it was first given to the world. French history, so far as it affects the other States of Europe, seems constantly to repeat itself. The dreams of ambition which Louis the Fourteenth first entertained were, notwithstanding the supineness of Louis the Fifteenth and his successor, systematized in the minds of philosophers and diplomatists in the French court: to be at first carried out during the subsequent Revolution, and more completely afterwards under the great man who, embodying in his own person the military genius of France, as Voltaire did her intellectual spirit, was in the year 1796 gradually rising to the head of affairs, and, not satisfied with the dictatorship of Europe, was to aspire to be the conqueror of the world. And it may gradually become clear, even to sceptical Liberals, whose lives have been spent in sneering at Burke as the advocate of war with revolutionary France, and applauding Fox for recommending peace with her, that Europe has not yet done with that formidable genius and character of the French Revolution, which Burke spent all the hours his health permitted for intellectual exertion, during the last year of his life, in portraying for his countrymen. His eloquent voice was soon to be silent; his energetic pen to be at rest for ever; but long years were to pass away, and his words to be sadly confirmed in many fields of blood—"We are not at the end, nor near it: we are only at the beginning of great troubles."

Perhaps the most remarkable circumstance connected with these wonderful Letters on a Regicide Peace, is the consciousness of impending death under which they were written. This feeling, however, so far from benumbing the author's energies, appears only more strongly to stimulate

those intellectual powers, which were about to be taken away from the world they had so long instructed and delighted. "What I say, I *must* say at once," Burke remarks at the close of the first Letter. "Whatever I write is in its nature testamentary. It may have the weakness, but it has the sincerity of a dying declaration." Like many other of his sentences which have been supposed to be mere rhetorical expressions, but when deliberately analyzed, will be found almost literal truths, these words were only too faithfully confirmed by the fact. The third Letter, on the rupture of the negotiations with Lord Malmesbury and his summary expulsion from Paris in forty-eight hours, was scarcely finished, and had not been published, before the author was, as he anticipated, sleeping by the side of his beloved son in the little church at Beaconsfield.

## CHAPTER XLV.

1796-7.

## LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH.

WHILE the reading public in the November of 1796 were perusing with admiration the two Letters on a Regicide Peace that had just been published, and his friends were sending him their congratulations, the author himself and his household at Beaconsfield were in a very indifferent way. Mrs. Burke still suffered much, and was obliged again to have recourse to blisters on her limbs. William still lingered on, sometimes a little better, sometimes a little worse, but with no prospect of a permanent recovery. Burke himself, though not so ill as during the past summer when he had been conveyed to Bath, was still an invalid, and seemed gradually relapsing into his former condition.

The state of affairs both at home and abroad contributed much to depress him, and to leave him almost prostrate to the attacks of organic disease, which it was evident had become fully established in his constitution. Against his most earnest counsels the Ministers persevered in negotiating a hopeless peace through Lord Malmesbury at Paris, and thought little of the necessity of vigorously preparing to carry on the contest, which the author of the Letters had told them in such eloquent language could not then be terminated. Disaffection

had increased to an alarming extent in Ireland; the Catholics, so imprudently baulked in the hopes they had been allowed to entertain, were thrown into the ranks of the Jacobins; and it became evident to Burke, as he had indeed long dreaded, that the British Government would soon in his native country have to contend at once with a foreign invasion and a civil war. As he lay on his couch at Beaconsfield and surveyed the political prospect around, dark indeed it appeared on whatever side he cast his sleepless eyes. He could not shut out his anxieties for the world he was so soon to leave. Never, indeed, since he had known England, not even when, during the worst season of the American war, the fleets of France and Spain domineered in the Channel, and the armed neutrality of the Baltic menaced England from the North, did the state of the Island Empire appear more alarming than as the year 1796 drew to an end, and the miserable remnants of the household over which Burke presided, prepared to pass at Beaconsfield the last winter he was ever to see.

He felt his physical strength insufficient to contend against the sapping of disease within and the gloom without. Had his Richard lived, Burke might have still been a hale and vigorous old man. He was as yet some two years from seventy; his constitution had been strong, and at the time of his retirement from Parliament, he might have counted on many years of life; but by his son's death he had received his death-blow, and perhaps even the retirement and his subsequent seclusion contributed, by the change of habits at an advanced age, to render the blow more fatal. His Parliamentary life had been for so many years so busy and energetic, that the sudden termination of it was alone a violent revolution in his life, and calculated to do him a serious injury.

When it came, accompanied with the destruction of all his earthly hopes, it is surprising that he lived so long afterwards, and gave such striking proofs of intellectual vigour and genius, and not that his health gradually declined. Many anxious inquiries he answered cheerfully, giving his correspondents indeed little hopes of his recovery, but speaking of his death with the greatest possible equanimity. In fact, he scarcely thought the topic worth a sentence in a letter. To the alternative of life or death he was equally resigned, and appeared not to have a wish one way or the other.

It was however this very feeling of indifference, amounting almost to apathy, which most painfully affected his dearest friends. Mrs. Crewe's affectionate heart was deeply moved. This noble woman did everything she could to comfort the miserable sufferers at Beaconsfield. To Burke and his wife she wrote long and lively letters from Chester, detailing all the politics of that provincial neighbourhood, sketching the habits and ways of life of the country squires, and displaying their thoughts and feelings on the war.

As Mrs. Crewe was also, as a common friend, though the wife of a decided member of Fox's party, taken into the counsels both of the Ministers and the Opposition, she told Burke all that was said by both sides about his Letters on a Regicide Peace. She detailed conversations with young Mr. Canning, whose public life had lately begun, and who had so strongly attached himself to Pitt and his very prosperous fortunes. The only fault, indeed, Mrs. Crewe said, that Mr. Canning found with the Letters was that Pitt and his policy were mentioned in somewhat unfavourable terms. Burke replied, "Tell Mr. Canning that I am very much flattered in finding that a man of

his genius and his virtue finds anything to tolerate in my feeble and belated endeavours to be useful, at a crisis of the world which calls for all the efforts of a rich mind like his, in the full vigour of all his mental and of all his bodily powers; but I am soothed in seeing that I continue the object of his early partiality. If I have written with any personal asperity to Mr. Pitt, it was very unwise and very unbecoming, and, I am sure, very contrary to my intentions; but having the misfortune of not being able to bring my mind up to the value of the measures that have been pursued, it was impossible that I should speak of them without the most marked concern, and without a strong feeling of the ill effects which had resulted from the system which had been adopted, and is persevered in. Perhaps it were better I had never written at all, but I had this to say, or nothing.”\*

Burke marked this portion of his letter to Mrs. Crewe with a little star, and gave her permission to show it to Canning. The aged statesman who was passing broken-hearted away, and the statesman who, young, eager, and ambitious, was just rising into reputation, thus greeted each other. In the political hemisphere one luminary rises or another sets; the world goes on as usual; every day, as usual, the morning newspaper with the leading articles appears, and is read at thousands of breakfast-tables; the routine of public business admits neither of rest nor pause; each day brings its daily duties; and, as Canning himself afterwards bitterly complained, a departed political leader, whether the head of a Ministry or the chief of an Opposition, is never missed.

Whatever effect such mortifying reflections had subsequently on Canning, they troubled Burke but little.

\* Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 360.

His mind was of another stamp; perhaps he felt, too, that his case would be an exception to the rule. Pitt and Fox, Canning and Peel, the statesmen of majorities of their day, have had their triumphs with their day, and with their day have passed away. But Burke's genius still animates that House where his advice was so frequently disregarded, which he never aspired to lead, and in which he generally sat in hopeless minorities. Up to the present hour, of all the statesmen whose statues adorn the entrance to the House of Commons, his name is most constantly on the lips; his words are the most frequently quoted; no great debate ever passes without him being appealed to as the most unexceptionable authority by one side or the other, and generally by both sides. The dying statesman could therefore look forward to a countless posterity and many future ages as his audience, long after Pitt and Fox, who were then contending for the glittering prizes of the hour, and all their supporters on the Ministerial and Opposition benches were gathered to their fathers, and the tongues of the great debaters were silenced for ever.

In Burke's language and conduct at this time, as he was wracked with pain, and had frequently three or four fits in one day, and sometimes in one night, there was a strange contrast. Though he had so long spoken of himself as dead to the world, and now felt himself dying, yet his interest in human affairs and the political events of the day seemed even to increase and intensify the nearer he approached his dissolution. This was, indeed, living for others, and not for himself. The affairs of Ireland gradually became more critical; the societies of United Irishmen were everywhere forming; the sagacious and politic Dr. Hussey was more alarmed than the



Ministers, because he comprehended the situation better, and wrote to Burke from the College of Maynooth, which had been so recently established, earnestly asking his advice. On the very day that Burke received this communication in December, he replied, in a long, eloquent, and sagacious epistle, commencing with some remarkable sentence about his own condition, which was as melancholy as the rest of the letter, dictated from his couch, on which he was obliged to lie all day, was energetic and statesmanlike in its grasp of the whole state of affairs. "I cannot conceal from you," he wrote, "much less can I conceal from myself, that in all probability I am not long for this world. Indeed, things are in such a situation, independently of the domestic wound, that I never could have less reason for regret in quitting the world than at this moment, and my end will be by several as little regretted." Yet it is in this letter, beginning in such a tone, that he discusses the question of toleration to the Irish Roman Catholics, predicts in the most prophetic spirit the terrible consequences which would result from allowing a junto of Orangemen at such a time to tyrannize over the rest of their countrymen, and to drive the Catholic soldiers to Protestant churches under the terrors of the whip; and in commenting on the crime and folly of the rulers who permitted such things to be, he bursts forth in this brilliant and noble style:—"When I consider the narrowness of the views and the total want of human wisdom displayed in our western crusade against Popery, it is impossible to speak of it but with every mark of contempt and scorn. Yet one cannot help shuddering with horror when one contemplates the terrible consequences that are frequently the result of craft united with folly, placed in an unnatural elevation. Such

ever will be the issue of things, when the mean vices attempt to mimic the grand passions. Great men will never do great mischief but for some great end. For this they must be in a state of inflammation, and, in a manner, out of themselves. Among the nobler animals whose blood is hot, the bite is never poisonous except when the creature is mad; but in the cold-blooded, reptile race, whose poison is exalted by the chemistry of their icy complexion, their venom is the result of their health and of the perfection of their nature. Woe to the country in which such snakes, whose *primum mobile* is their belly, obtain wings, and from serpents become dragons. It is not that these people want natural talents, and even a good cultivation; on the contrary, they are the sharpest and most sagacious of mankind in the things to which they apply. But having wasted their faculties in base and unworthy objects, in anything of a higher order they are far below the common rate of two-legged animals.”\*

General Hoche and the French fleet were hovering over the Irish coast; disaffection was making steady progress among the Catholics; and by Burke’s prophetic glance, the inevitable rebellion of ’98 and all its dismal consequences were seen unmistakably approaching, as he thus in the intervals of pain poured out his anxious thoughts to his friend, Dr. Hussey, in this extraordinary and energetic language. His mighty mind seemed to grow in power and foresight as his physical powers decayed; and the nearer the hour of his death drew near, the brighter appeared to shine forth those intellectual faculties, which no disease could enfeeble, and which, as their possessor was sinking into the tomb, seemed to light up the darkness of the future.

\* Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 385.

With Dr. Laurence also Burke earnestly corresponded, expressing his forebodings on the state of Ireland, as well as on the condition of the Continent, when Napoleon was on the Adige, and the great victory of Rivoli, following fast on Arcola, was about to lay Austria prostrate in Italy and electrify France. Laurence, being at last elected a Member of Parliament, had taken his seat in the House of Commons. He described for Burke, with the fidelity of an eye-witness, all that passed on the scene he had quitted for ever; and in the evening the old man, as he reclined on his sick couch, would picture to himself the debate that was at the same time proceeding in the House of Commons, and dictate his speculations on the subject to the friend who was just beginning his Parliamentary career. Burke seldom now wrote with his own hand. His strength did not allow him to use the pen; his letters were dictated to one of his relatives, the Nagles. Edmund Nagle, whom he had years ago sent to sea as a midshipman, and who, as Sir Edmund, was distinguishing himself in the course of the war by many gallant services, spent his hours on shore at Beaconsfield; and another young man of the same family generally resided with Burke, and was his assiduous attendant and occasional amanuensis. To this Nagle, too, who obtained, through Windham's influence, an appointment in the War Office, both Laurence and Windham anxiously wrote about Burke's health when they did not wish to trouble their friend himself, and they both charged the young man most earnestly to communicate to them every change of symptom which the disorder might assume.

Burke, on the other hand, forgetting himself, was equally anxious about Laurence's first appearance as an

orator in the House of Commons. He believed him fully capable of performing a great part, and wished to see him justify this confidence. On what question was Laurence to make his maiden speech? How was he to steer his course as the representative of the policy which Burke and Lord Fitzwilliam almost alone advised, and against both the Ministerialists and the Opposition? The question produced many letters between the old statesman and the learned oracle of Doctors' Commons. Ill as Burke was, the slightest circumstance in the lives of his friends seemed to render him anxious. At Christmas Laurence had a cold, and Burke most anxiously advised him not to neglect it. "This thaw," wrote Burke, "favours your recovery. A cough is not to be trifled with, especially in a full habit like yours. Unless a physician had dissuaded it, I wish you had been blooded. I wish you to take advice: that bleeding may be useful."\* Burke's apprehensions were not without foundation. Laurence's full habit of body did not promise him a long life.

On the Christmas-day of 1796, his last Christmas-day, Burke wrote to Laurence, principally on the summary expulsion of Lord Malmesbury from France. That event had just occurred. It threw the political world into commotion, destroyed Pitt's hopes of peace, and confirmed all Burke's anticipations of the insults which a British plenipotentiary on such a mission would have to endure. He was, however, in no triumphant mood. His mind was with the dead. Again we find him troubled with the harrowing thought that he had, by his neglect, cut short the life of his son. "Adieu," he said, "and many happy returns of the season. We are sorry not to have had you at our turkey and roast beef. Alas! the times

\* Laurence Correspondence, p. 108.

have been when you would have found a more full and cheerful family. But I was unworthy of it, and have lost it by my own fault. Learn from me never to trifle with such blessings as God may give you."

A few days afterwards Laurence, with Burke's consent, brought James Mackintosh down to Beaconsfield. Burke himself admitted this young author to have been his ablest opponent; and Mackintosh, in return, had treated Burke with the most respectful deference, and allowed it to be understood in every line, that while combating the sentiments of the *Reflections*, they were at least the sentiments of the greatest philosopher and statesman of the age. One of the finest passages in the *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*, and the most creditable to Mackintosh's heart, was that in which, after quoting Burke's declaration, that old as he was he read with pleasure the fine raptures of Lucan and Corneille about liberty, he had eloquently expressed his hopes that "long might that reverend old age continue!" Since then, notwithstanding the applause of the Foxite Whigs, the bloody saturnalia of the Jacobins had almost converted Mackintosh to Burke's views, and having intimated so much to Dr. Laurence, he had expressed a wish to visit Burke in his retirement at Beaconsfield. He knew that the life of the venerable statesman was most precarious; and that Burke had in all probability but a few months to continue in the world. Mackintosh came down to Beaconsfield, and was received with much kindness by his revered host. Throughout the course of his life Sir James looked back to this visit with the greatest pleasure. It was something to have met Burke in kindness, to have looked upon his emaciated form with real emotion, and to have pressed his hand affectionately before he was called away for ever.

Another visitor, almost at the same time, was received by Burke with other, though not opposite feelings. His old friend and companion of the days of the Rockingham party, Lord John Cavendish, himself in a feeble and almost dying state, came down to pay a farewell visit to him whose counsels and labours he had so often shared. Lord John, after his defeat for Yorkshire in 1784, had retired altogether from public life, had been treated by Fox and his friends with as little respect as Burke, and had in fact been by them studiously neglected. The meeting between him and Burke at the close of 1796 was most affecting on both sides. They were both suffering invalids; they were both expecting the hour of their dissolution; it was uncertain which of them would be the first called away. Two days after their parting, Burke received the intelligence that Lord John Cavendish had expired. "He has gone," he remarked, "a little before me."\*

At the beginning of the new year, 1797, Burke gradually became worse. All the painful symptoms which the Bath waters had in the autumn in some degree alleviated, were more threatening than ever. He became a mere skeleton; nothing would rest upon his stomach; everything he ate turned to wind; his nights were restless. To be up at all in the day was almost too much exertion. He spent most of his time in bed. His friends advised him again to try the Bath waters; as they had only recently been so beneficial to him, it was not unreasonable to hope that they might have once more a similar effect. Burke, however, was much averse to leave his country home, where he had all his books around him, and where he could at least be quiet and see no visitors but by choice. If he went to Bath he went into

\* Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 411.

a crowd; he would even have to take his glass of water in public; he must make up his mind to be stared at by hundreds of the idle and thoughtless people, who attended that fashionable resort. He therefore resisted the importunities of those who were dear to him, until in the middle of January his illness seemed to get almost beyond the power of medicine to relieve.

Windham, in the midst of his ministerial duties, had already written anxiously to Burke, advising, with others, another journey to Bath. Finding, however, his counsels neglected, and the invalid every day getting worse, he almost began to suspect that Burke did not wish to recover. On the seventeenth of January the Secretary at War sat down and wrote a strong and earnest letter of remonstrance to his friend, imploring him to make some efforts to preserve a life which, however indifferent to himself, could not "cease but to the infinite affliction of those whose happiness is most dear to you, and with a loss to the world such as it could never have produced, or been known at least to produce, at any other period." He put the question plainly to him: Did he or did he not wish to recover? If not, it was of course idle to recommend any remedies. If he did, he had but one course to take, to put himself under the direction of the physicians, implicitly to follow their advice, and, as they all agreed he ought to do, to repair once more to Bath and try again those waters which he had before found so efficacious. "Can you, my dear sir," remonstrated Windham, "justify it to yourself, can you justify it to your friends and those most dear to you, that you have suffered yourself to be diverted by a repugnance founded on nothing but a dislike of what you call going into public, to defer a repetition of that remedy, till your disorder has now gained

such ground that no one certainly can pretend to rely, with equal confidence, on the power of Bath water to stop it?" The humane and refined Windham, who had so attentively watched over Dr. Johnson in his last illness, offered at once to give up both his holiday excursion into Norfolk and his political duties for the time, and accompany Burke to Bath. Two days afterwards he set off for Beaconsfield with an eminent physician; and in person strongly supported the affectionate representations he had so warmly expressed in his letter.\*

Burke had little confidence in any further beneficial result from the remedy he was so strongly exhorted to try. At last, however, he yielded to Windham's importunities; and at the end of January again, with Mrs. Burke, repaired to Bath. Windham was prevented from going with them as he had proposed, but followed them down on the second of February, and remained with them for a week.

Burke's appearance in the pump-room, whither he had to be led, supported by his young relative Nagle, created a painful sensation. His face was ghastly; his emaciation extreme; his flesh and his strength appeared to have gone together. He tried the waters for a few days, and then gave them up for ever. His disorder seemed neither to increase nor lessen, and he appeared to be suspended between life and death. Then the pains and flatulency in the stomach diminished; but these favourable symptoms were soon counteracted by others perhaps more alarming. He was seized with fits of giddiness in the head; and whenever he tried to walk began to stagger about the room. When this indication was told by Burke to Laurence, the good civilian attributed it merely

\* See Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 424.



to the effect of the Bath waters. The dying statesman, however, judged more correctly. "The violent storms of wind," he said, "have not been quite so troublesome to me since the complaint in my head came on; but they have taken the town and are now attacking the citadel."

For a few days he gave up talking about politics. Before Windham left, however, in this most anxious crisis in public affairs, with Buonaparte triumphant in Italy, with our means of defence paralyzed by the grossest mismanagement, and an attempt on Ireland, which Burke had distinctly foreseen, but the menacing portents of which had been disregarded by the British Government, the two friends talked long and anxiously together. Windham set off for London with the intention of earnestly impressing Burke's counsels on the Ministry of which he was a member.

After the departure of his friend, Burke felt himself weaker than ever. Even with assistance he could scarcely walk across the room; his fits of giddiness became more frequent, and he felt himself gradually sinking. While thus suffering he received a letter from Laurence, informing him that a great Dutch house in the city, Messrs. Muilman, Nantes, and Co., with whom Mrs. Hastings had had an account amounting to forty-four thousand pounds, had failed; that she had long ago earnestly requested, though without effect, that the stock she supposed to have been bought with her savings should be transferred into her own name; but that the money had never been forthcoming, and as the leading partner in the firm had shot himself and the bankruptcy was declared, there was little prospect of her recovering any portion of her vast hoard of rupees, which had been acquired, Laurence wrote, "I suppose, wholly without the

knowledge of that innocent and persecuted man, her husband."

Burke was at first amused at the receipt of this intelligence. The letter however again brought the affairs of India into his anxious and thoughtful mind. He was conscious that his life was ebbing fast; he thought of the work on the impeachment which he must leave undone, and how his justification in undertaking that great labour must remain, if it were to be accomplished at all, for the friendly pen of Laurence. He had been sent, he said, by Pitt and Dundas to prosecute Hastings, and they had afterwards thought fit to concur in a grant of a greater sum of money to the man whom they had considered a criminal than any British subject except the Duke of Marlborough had ever received. He wrote again to Laurence, reminding him of the request he had preferred while at this same Bath during the last autumn, and telling him that if he should execute such a work, and fortify it with the proper documents, he would "erect a cenotaph most grateful to my shade." Again Burke wrote the solemn word, "Remember," with which he had concluded his former letter. "It is," he said, "no excuse at all to urge in my apology that I had enthusiastic good intentions. In reality you know that I am no enthusiast, but, according to the powers that God has given me, a sober and reflecting man. I have not even the other very bad excuse of acting from personal resentment or from the sense of private injury—never having received any; nor can I plead ignorance, no man ever having taken more pains to be informed. 'Therefore *I say, Remember.*'"\*

Before this letter was sent off, a few words were privately added to it, signed E. Nagle, informing Dr. Lau-

\* Laurence Correspondence, p. 117.

rence that all newspapers were kept away from Burke, and his letters withheld from him, until Mrs. Burke knew what steps had been taken on some very disagreeable business in which Laurence and Dr. Walker King, as Burke's friends, were engaged in London.

This mysterious allusion was to the surreptitious publication of the manuscript which Burke had, in the September of 1793, sent to the Duke of Portland on the Conduct of the Minority, and which, early in the February of this year, while Burke was lying ill at Bath, was announced in the newspapers as about to be published, from his pen, as Fifty-Four Articles of Impeachment against the Right Hon. C. J. Fox. The rascally publisher, Owen, not satisfied with having deprived Burke of the profits of the Letter to a Noble Lord, and publishing a pirated edition of the Two Letters to a Noble Lord, had obtained from the clerk Swift, whom Burke had about a year ago suspected of dishonesty, and had therefore, through the agency of Dr. Laurence, sought most anxiously to get all his manuscript papers out of this copyist's hands, the letter to the Duke of Portland and Lord Fitzwilliam. This he audaciously advertised under the startling title he himself affixed to it; and the whole political world was thrown into a great excitement, and expected the appearance of the work with the utmost impatience. Dr. Laurence and Dr. King, assisted by the affidavit of Mr. Rivington, succeeded in obtaining an injunction against Owen on the very day of publication. Two thousand copies had however been issued, and the mischief was effectually done.

This was much to be regretted. Burke was dying; and the effect of such an unauthorized publication under such a title was of course to keep alive and even stimu-

late against him all the animosities of Fox and the more democratic Whigs, at a time when it would have been more pleasing to see them entirely abate. It happened that the work so shamefully brought to light came out on the same day as a pamphlet by Erskine in defence of Fox and the Opposition. The two publications were brought into direct collision. The vanity of the great advocate was again deeply wounded; for it was generally declared that his production could not bear comparison, as a literary performance, with the fraudulent publication of Swift and Owen. It was said completely to lay Erskine on his back, and to make sad havoc with Fox's political reputation. Pitt read it with great delight, and indeed with more gratification, remarked Windham, than he ought to have displayed at such an attack upon his rival; and the Prime Minister enthusiastically declared it to be a model in that style of composition.\*

And all this time Burke was quite unconscious of the controversy he had occasioned and the bitter enmities he had once more provoked. It was not until she had, on opening a letter to Burke from Dr. Laurence, learnt that all steps had been taken and the injunction obtained, that Mrs. Burke went up to Burke's bedroom, and at two o'clock in the afternoon of the fifteenth of February, delivered to him his newspapers and correspondence which had been kept back for a whole week. He received the news of the surreptitious publication more gently than she had expected. "This affair does vex me," he said, "but I am not in a state of health at present to be deeply vexed at anything." The only circumstance at which he was very much annoyed, arose from a report communicated to him by Dr. Brocklesby, that the paper had been

\* Correspondence, vol. iv. p. 430.

long in circulation among the Ministers and was intended by degrees to get into the press. This allegation he authorized Laurence and other friends to contradict. He cautioned them however very strongly against, while disclaiming any intention on his part of giving the letter to the world, of letting it be in the slightest degree understood that he was prepared to retract any one of the statements or sentiments it contained. "Had I intended it for the public," he declared to Dr. Laurence, "I should have been more exact and full. It is written in a tone of indignation against the resolutions of the Whig Club, which were directly pointed against myself and others who seceded from that Club, which is the last act of my life that I shall ever repent of. Many temperaments and explanations there would have been, if ever I had had a notion that it should meet the public eye." He commented very warmly, and with good reason, on the delays of the law courts, and on the knavery of the publisher Owen, whose conduct exceeds in disgracefulness anything that the Dublin pirates or Edmund Curll ever did, or that can be met with in the proceedings of any other English publishers, who are, whatever some dissatisfied gentlemen may believe, an honourable class of men. "Why," asked Burke, "should not the Court of Chancery be able to know whether an author gives an imperfect copy to a printer to be published, whether he will or no, and has not left himself master of his own thoughts and reflections? This is the very case made by the wretch himself, but a court can't decide in years whether this thing ought to be done or not. In the meantime, he enjoys the profits of his villany, and defies them by villanies of the same kind and to the same person."\*

\* Laurence Correspondence, p. 127.

But the most curious circumstance connected with this fraudulent publication relates to the manuscript from which Owen's edition was printed. Burke believed that there were only two copies in existence, the clean one which he had sent to the Duke of Portland, and the rough and incorrect papers which Dr. Laurence had about a year before paid Swift a guinea to give up. How then, Burke asked himself, unless Swift had contemplated this fraud for a long while, could he have obtained another copy? But the truth is that the manuscript from which Owen published was a clean copy made by Swift, and corrected by Burke himself. The facsimile of half a page of this manuscript, which was given by Swift's sister after his death to the gentleman who kindly permitted me to inspect it, shows how carefully it had been corrected by Burke.\* But while the original rough sheets were obtained from Swift, the corrected copy appears altogether to have been overlooked and allowed to remain in his hands; and even when the villany was actually perpetrated, Burke never seems to have remembered the existence of this manuscript.

Another curious circumstance was the denial, through the newspapers, of that leading accusation, Mr. Adair's mission to St. Petersburg. He did not go, he said, as Fox's ambassador. He had committed no misdemeanor. This denial was not however deemed satisfactory at that time; and though Sir Robert Adair survived up to our day, and at a very advanced age stood alone at last as representing Fox's contemporaries in the Court of Queen Victoria, he felt very recently, and in very similar terms, again compelled, in reply to Lord Campbell, to repeat, with all his old animosity against Burke, the statement

\* See *ante*, p. 531.

he made in 1797. It is certain, however, that the fact of his embassy was a matter of common belief at the time; that the Ministers were fully informed, through the British representative at St. Petersburg, of the part Mr. Adair had played in thwarting their negotiations; and that he had been the medium, when our Government was almost at war with Russia, of a mutual interchange of compliments between Fox and the Empress Catherine. That he, though an ardent follower of Fox, was not his formal agent when travelling in Russia, may have been quite true; and yet the truth of his having made some very interesting communications between the Russian Sovereign and the leader of the English Opposition, averse to the policy pursued by Pitt, would not, to any reasonable mind, admit of a doubt. It was pitiable, however, to hear, within the last few years, the nonagenarian Sir Robert Adair give utterance to all his original prejudices against Burke, and impute to him something very much like dishonesty in condemning the French Revolution, and in drawing up the paper which had in so unexpected and so unauthorized a manner been given to the world.

The members of the Opposition might however rail at Burke as they pleased: he was in the spring of 1797 indifferent to their accusations and reproaches. The pains in his stomach still continued more subdued than they had been when he first repaired to Bath, but he became perceptibly weaker, and could scarcely walk, without assistance, from his sofa to his bed. He was compelled to take strong purgatives, which relieved him for the time, but left him feebler and more emaciated than ever. Every eight or nine days he was seized with violent fits of vomiting, which produced the same effect; yet he lingered

on through the months of March and April, at No. 11, North Parade, writing at intervals as much as he could of the third Letter on a Regicide Peace, anxious even to the end to animate the drooping spirit of the country.

Never did the political prospects of England look darker than at this time, when Burke surveyed them from his bed of sickness. All the evils that can afflict a State seemed to combine in one overwhelming avalanche, and to bear down on this unhappy empire. It was not sufficient to be beaten on the Continent, and to have Ireland steadily approaching rebellion. England was threatened with national bankruptcy; the funds, from being at ninety-eight, when the war began, came down to fifty; and, to the anticipated ruin of that gigantic system of public credit established in the reign of William the Third, the Bank of England was, after paying in sixpences, obliged to suspend cash payments altogether. But this was not the worst. The people were appalled on finding in this tremendous crisis, when Austria was at last obliged to listen to terms of peace, and it became clear that England would have to fight on alone against a victorious enemy, their favourite arm, the navy, threaten to fail them. The Channel fleet was in open mutiny at Portsmouth; and after this had been pacified, it was succeeded in the following month by the still more formidable mutiny at the Nore.

Laurence managed, at the end of April to spare a few days from his law courts, and Windham from the House of Commons and the War-office, and they both visited Burke at Bath. They had long consultations on political affairs; and Wilberforce, who had been at Bath almost ever since Burke had repaired thither, frequently visiting him and paying him the most delicate attentions, called



on him the afternoon before Windham set off again for London to attend his ministerial duties. The words in which Pitt's virtuous friend recorded the scene in his diary, have been frequently quoted. "The whole scene," wrote Wilberforce, "is now before me. Burke was lying on a sofa, much emaciated; and Windham, Laurence, and some other friends were around him. The attention shown to Burke by all that party was just like the treatment of Abithophel of old. 'It was as if one went to inquire of the oracle of the Lord.'"\*

Those dear friends long remembered the counsels Burke then gave on political affairs. On the affairs of the Bank, and the means proposed to remedy them, many years afterwards Canning quoted a message sent through him to Pitt, as a wonderful instance of the sagacious foresight of Burke's views. On the mutinies in the navy his advice was also remembered afterwards as coinciding with that of the most intrepid commanders and wisest administrators. But it was on the affairs of Ireland he discoursed the most, and felt the saddest and most anxious forebodings. The task of Catholic Emancipation, from the line taken by the Ministry, he saw had now become more difficult; and yet, if the empire was to be preserved, he declared such a course to be inevitable. Meanwhile, the Protestant Dissenters in the north, and the discontented Catholics of the south, were both joining the ranks of Jacobinism. Everything tended to some great convulsion. Burke was almost in despair as he contemplated that to which so many others were so supinely indifferent. In the intervals of pain he dictated from his couch another and last long letter to a friend on Irish affairs. Every sentence of it, published in his works, may yet

\* Wilberforce's Diary, vol. ii. p. 211.

be read with astonishment and admiration. "My sentiments," he said in the concluding paragraph, "may have little weight as coming from me; and I have not power enough of mind or body to bring them out with their natural force. But I do not wish to have it concealed that I am of the same opinion to my last breath which I entertained when my faculties were at the best; and I have not held back from men in power in this kingdom, to whom I have very good wishes, any part of my sentiments on this melancholy subject, so long as I had means of access to persons of their consideration."

The month of May came in as fresh and beautiful as ever. To Burke, however, it brought with it no signs of returning health. Though his pain almost ceased, his feeble remnant of physical strength still sank lower every day. His presentiment had been just. The Bath waters had this time done him no good; and his physicians, about the middle of the month, candidly informed him that, though he might yet linger for some time, they could expect no more benefit from Bath, and had given up all hopes of his ultimate recovery.

He was not in the least disturbed by this intelligence. Existence had been for nearly three years a burden to him; and he prepared himself calmly to submit with the most unfeigned acquiescence to the will of Providence. Since he was to die, he wished however to die at home. He wished to die amid the scenes he had so long loved; near the church where the remains of his lost son were lying, and where his own were so soon to be laid. He was anxious, therefore, to leave Bath as soon as possible, and quietly to await the great event at Beaconsfield.

Before setting forth homewards, however, he dictated

several letters to his old friends, telling them that all hope was over. These letters are most remarkable for the tone of resignation and content in which the dying man contemplated his approaching end. To Dr. Hussey, Arthur Young, Dr. Laurence, and Mrs. Crewe, who had only recently left Bath after showing during her visit the kindest and most assiduous attentions both to himself and his wife, Burke wrote in the same placid strain, informing them that all expectations of his recovery were gone, and that all he wished was to reach Beaconsfield alive. The last letter on this subject, written on the twenty-third of the month, was to Richard Shackleton's daughter Mrs. Leadbeater, giving her in a similar tone the same mournful intelligence, and inquiring most affectionately about the school in which his boyhood had been passed, and the relatives of his departed friend whom he hoped to rejoin. "I have been," he said in conclusion, "at Bath these four months to no purpose, and am therefore to be taken to my own house at Beaconsfield to-morrow, to be nearer to a habitation more permanent, humbly and fearfully hoping that my better part may find a better mansion."\*

The humble Quakers at Ballitore were much affected on receiving this farewell letter from their illustrious friend. Mrs. Leadbeater replied in the style of her sect, "This day's post brought me thy letter of the twenty-third instant, dictated and signed by thee. Such attention, at such a time, and in such a situation! It was like Edmund Burke. It was like few others; but it is not bestowed on hearts who do not feel it." Burke was told that all the younger members of the Shackleton family were

\* This most interesting letter was first published by Mrs. Leadbeater in her volume of Poems, p. 323.

well, and that the school was never in higher estimation. But he was also informed that the signs of insurrection and civil war, which he had so anxiously striven to avert, were rife even in the quiet vale of Ballitore. "The general fermentation throughout this nation," said Mrs. Leadbeater, "forebodes some sudden and dreadful eruption, and, however obscure or retired our situations may be, there is little prospect of escaping the calamity. This may cause us to admire, nay adore, the mercy as well as wisdom of Him who gives and takes life, in removing those so dear to us from the evil to come." These forebodings were only too sadly confirmed. The fierce hurricane of '98 did not pass over Ireland without leaving frightful traces of its passage even in the retired valley of Ballitore, and the good Quakers had to see, amid the grounds where Burke and Shackleton once walked and rhymed together in friendship, sights from which their eyes turned with horror, and which they could never afterwards forget.

When Burke received Mrs. Leadbeater's letter, of which the political portion confirmed his worst anticipations, he had arrived once more at Beaconsfield. He left Bath on Wednesday, the twenty-fourth of May, and was conveyed by easy stages through the vale of Rodborough, and by Cheltenham and Oxford to his own home. The journey occupied four days. He was a mere skeleton. Writing to Dr. Laurence on the first of June, he said, "If I should live to see you, you will rather think me a man dug out of the grave than as a man going, as I am, into it. I am infinitely weaker than when I left this, and far more emaciated. *Pallor in ore sedet, macies in corpore toto.* I look like Ovid's Envy, but, thank God! without much envying any one; and certainly not in a condition to be

envied, except by those who prognosticate the dreadful evils of every kind which are impending over us.”\*

Lord Fitzwilliam and Dr. Hussey were with him immediately after his arrival at home, and anxiously consulted him on those Irish affairs in which he still took so much interest. He conversed with these friends for hours, thinking, as he said, that he might not live to talk over the subject with them again; and after their visits he was more wearied, fatigued, and feeble, than he had ever been. Had the state of the country been more cheerful, he might have borne up against the attacks of his disease; but as day after day passed on, and the prospect became darker, he who was a patriot to the last, felt the poor remains of his strength decline with the declining condition of the empire.

In the first week of June, things seemed to have come to the worst. The mutinous fleet at the Nore was blockading the Thames; London appeared at the mercy of the rebellious sailors; the commerce and the fuel of the capital were threatened to be at once cut off. Burke, growing weaker and weaker, tossed himself restlessly on his couch at Beaconsfield. “As to the state of this kingdom,” he said to Dr. Laurence, “it does not appear to me to be a great deal better than that of Ireland. Perhaps in some points of view it is worse. To see the Thames itself boldly blocked up by a rebellious British fleet, is such a thing as in the worst of our dreams we could scarcely have imagined.”

But even then he was far from despairing of the strength of England. Nothing had happened except through errors in statesmanship, of which the effect might have been foreseen. Nothing had happened but what he be-

\* Laurence Correspondence, p. 235.

lieved a wiser statesmanship could remedy. Anything was still better than a pusillanimous surrender to the armed democracy of France. The prophets of evil declared that England had not the power to carry on the contest other two years. He knew the contrary. Just as his first political work was an answer to the croakings of George Grenville about England being ruined at the close of the Seven Years' War, so now, Burke spent the last weeks of his life in examining the resources of the country in the third letter on a Regicide Peace, and demonstrating through statistics, as in the Observations on the State of the Nation, that we had all the means of victory yet in our hands. How true these calculations were, the eighteen years of warfare which followed abundantly testified. The letter was not quite completed when he found himself unable to do any more. To the friends Laurence, King, and Windham, who gathered around him, as it seemed clear that the end was near, he still, however, with faltering accents, said, in terms which were to be recorded in history as his dying words, "Never succumb. It is a struggle for your existence as a nation. If you must die, die with the sword in your hand. But I have no fears whatever for the result. There is a salient living principle of energy in the public mind of England, which only requires proper direction to withstand this, or any other ferocious foe. Persevere, therefore, till this tyranny be overpast."

At the beginning of July, he appeared quite exhausted. It seemed evident to himself and his devoted friends that he had but a few days to live, and that at any moment he might be called away. Mrs. Crewe, affectionate and attentive to the last, came down to Beaconsfield, and remained with Mrs. Burke, attempting to comfort her in

her great affliction, and <sup>sted</sup> on <sup>ng</sup> with truly feminine tenderness the bedside of the dying statesman.

Days passed on. Burke was calmly awaiting the hour of his dissolution, neither, as Dr. Laurence said, appearing to wish nor to dread the impending event. Wilberforce had sent him a presentation copy of his celebrated book on Practical Christianity. It contained much with which the friend of Richard Shackleton could strongly sympathize; and Burke spent a large portion of Friday and Saturday, July the seventh and eighth, in reading its earnest and pious pages. He entrusted Laurence with the expression of his thanks to Wilberforce for having sent such a book into the world.\*

On the Saturday afternoon he gradually became more feeble. It was evident that the event he had so long anticipated was at hand. He sent the most affectionate messages to his absent friends. He examined himself strictly, and asked forgiveness of all whom he supposed that he had in any degree offended. He recapitulated his motives of action in the leading circumstances of his life, solemnly testifying to the last his abhorrence of the spirit in which the French Revolution had been wrought out, and expressing once more his earnest conviction that the war England was then carrying on was for all the great interests of civilization and humanity. He gave directions about his funeral. He listened with the deepest attention to some of his favourite papers by Addison on the immortality of the soul, and declared his implicit trust in that mercy "which," he said, "I have long sought with unfeigned humiliation, and to which I look forward with a trembling hope." It was just after midnight of Saturday, the eighth of July. Burke was, as he had been

\* Life of Wilberforce, vol. ii. p. 208. \*

all day, lying on a couch, <sup>ip could</sup> surrounded by his friends. He desired at last to be conveyed to bed. As his relative Nagle, from the War-office, and his old servants Mr. and Mrs. Webster, were endeavouring to comply with his wishes, he sank down in the middle of the room, his head fell upon his breast, and blessing all around him, after a slight struggle, he expired without a groan.

A beautiful death, fitly closing such a life. "See," said Addison, "how a Christian can die!" Burke would not say as much; but he nobly exemplified that dying declaration of one whom he resembled in his love of virtue and the purity of his life, and surpassed in the vigour of his understanding, and the extent of his intellectual resources. He did not, like Mirabeau, indulge in theatrical and self-conscious heroics on his bed of death; he did not, like Hume, show a sceptical and affected indifference to the future; he did not, like Goethe, calmly die, as he had lived, a worshiper of art, and of nothing else; he did not, like Johnson, tremble with horror at the prospect of facing the great mystery which for him was about to be unveiled. "His end," wrote Laurence, on the Sunday morning, over the lifeless remains, "was suited to the simple greatness of his mind, which he displayed through life, every way unaffected, without levity, without ostentation, full of natural grace and dignity."\*

A medical examination was made of the body. An abscess was found to have formed in the side; and the stomach had for years been affected by a similar disease, which a distinguished physician, Sir Gilbert Blane,

\* Laurence's notice of Burke's death, containing the most authentic record of the circumstances attending the event, will be found in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. lxxvii. p. 621. See also *The Times*, of Monday and Tuesday, July 10 and 11, 1797.



who had been consulted on the subject, afterwards informed Mr. Prior he had long suspected to be of cancerous nature. This was indeed the fact. The heart, too, was much enlarged; a symptom confirming the popular notion that it had been broken through sorrow at the death of his beloved Richard, whom he had at last gone to join.\*

Parliament was not prorogued when the news of Burke's death reached the Metropolis. Fox proposed in the House of Commons that the departed statesman should have a public funeral, and his remains be buried with all mortuary honours in Westminster Abbey. The dust of an English worthy never had a nobler claim to rest in the national Pantheon. But Burke had so strongly expressed in his will his desire for a humbler resting-place, that it was not, of course, even on the plea of doing honour to his memory, to be disregarded. It is not at all necessary, however, to suppose that though Fox was informed of the circumstance before he made his proposal, it was brought forward by him under a pretence of liberality which he did not really feel.† Such an imputation is in fact more illiberal than the pretence which it seeks to stigmatize. It is much more agreeable to the feelings, and is perhaps much more in correspondence with the fact, to believe that Fox heard of Burke's death with much emotion, and that for the moment he forgot their late enmity and remembered only how much he owed to him who had formerly been his political preceptor and his generous and devoted friend. A great change about this time passed over Fox. He became less eager for success in the political struggle. He began to love his home and domestic quiet. He married the woman whom he

\* See Prior, p. 458.

† Ibid., p. 459.

tenderly loved and who had for him sacrificed so much. He turned his thoughts to literature, and wished to leave behind him an elaborate historical work embodying the principles of English freedom that he had so ardently asserted in the senate. His better nature finally conquered the worse, and in his later life, dating from the very year and summer of 1797, he showed a tender and even childish delight in the simplest and most innocent of human pleasures. With a green apron round his waist, nailing up his fruit-trees to the wall, or watching the birds build their nests in the branches, the Fox of St. Anne's Hill at the beginning of this century was a very different man from the dissolute devotee of the gaming-table and Newmarket; and part of this great reformation I have often wished to attribute to his feelings on the death of Burke.

But Fox received no instructions to be present at the funeral. Mrs. Crewe superintended all the arrangements. The pall-bearers were principally the distinguished members of the old Whig party, who, acknowledging the nominal leadership of the Duke of Portland, had, at one time or another, joined the ministerial ranks. Of these men were, Sir Gilbert Elliot, Earl Fitzwilliam, Mr. Windham, the Lord Chancellor Loughborough, and the Duke of Portland himself; and with them were the Duke of Devonshire, the Earl of Inchiquin, and Addington, the Speaker of the House of Commons. The funeral took place on Saturday, the fifteenth of the month, just a week after Burke's death. The day before, the remains had been removed to the large house near the church, belonging to the Havilands, to give greater facilities for the walking procession; and though the deceased had left the strictest injunction for everything to be as private as possible, the ceremony was of the most imposing kind.

The carriages of the great noblemen and members of Parliament from London crowded the little village. Seventy members of the Benefit Society Burke had established, all in mourning, walked before the coffin. Just before eight o'clock, on a beautiful summer evening, as the rays of the setting sun were penetrating through the narrow casements of the little church, Burke's remains were slowly lowered into the grave which had been first occupied by those of his brother Richard, and a few months afterwards by those of his son. At last it was over. The broken-hearted father had his wish gratified; and he reposed by the side of his Richard, whom he had so much lamented. Nearly fifteen years passed away before the family pew under which the grave was partly situated was once more taken down, and the flagstones again removed; and the remains of Mrs. Burke were, in the April of 1812, deposited in the same tomb.

So long did this excellent lady, whose health had been so delicate, survive her illustrious husband. While he lived she had as a wife nobly acted her part. She had made his home happy. As the anxious and careful superintendent of his private affairs, she had kept all his accounts, regulated all his pecuniary transactions, and allowed his mind to be kept free for his public duties. After his death she had but one duty in the world; and that was to discharge the debts which Burke had left, and which had mainly induced him to accept the pension from the Crown. The income from this annuity she studiously applied to this purpose, and had the satisfaction, in the course of the years that remained to her, of discharging to the utmost farthing every pecuniary obligation which her husband had owed. To effect this object more easily, she sold the estate to a neighbouring land-

proprietor, Mr. Du Pré, of Wilton Park ; but stipulated that she should retain possession of the house and grounds for her use while she lived. As she advanced in years, the rheumatism in her limbs which had long given Burke so much anxiety, and threatened to cut short her life before his own, almost rendered her a cripple. But she kept to the last much of the placid and cheerful equanimity which had been so characteristic of her, and when Crabbe, again after a long silence, appeared before the public as a poet, in returning him thanks for the presentation copy of his poem, she wrote, "*Your friend* never lost sight of worth and abilities."\* As long as Windham and Laurence lived, they were her faithful and assiduous advisers ; but they both prematurely died before her ; and at last she found herself almost alone. Nobly however had she fulfilled the duties allotted to her in the world ; though sad must have been some of the hours of her lonely widowhood, as she lived in strict seclusion amid all the objects associated with the memory of her son and husband, went every Sunday to the little church in which they were at rest, and sat in the family pew almost above their common grave.

Her companion during those sad years was her niece, Mrs. Thomas Haviland. This lady's son, who was born in such melancholy circumstances in the autumn of 1795, became, as he considered, the sole representative of Burke, and as such took his name. It is much, however, to be regretted that Mr. Haviland thought it becoming to propagate a very unjust reproach against Mrs. Burke's memory, and that, by his suggestion, it has found a place and apparent countenance in preceding biographies of Burke.† It has been stated that Mrs. Haviland re-

\* Crabbe's Life.

† Prior, p. 462.

sided at Beaconsfield during the last years of the life of Mrs. Burke, under the promise of being made her heir ; that this obligation Mrs. Burke did not fulfil ; that in bequeathing what she had to leave to her own nephew Mr. Nugent she was guilty of something like an act of injustice to the direct representatives of Burke's family name ; and that her husband would not have approved of this partiality to the Nugents as against the Havilands. Standing by the family grave at Beaconsfield, with all its solemn and pathetic associations, it seems an irksome task to be obliged to protect the memory of Mrs. Burke from those who ought to have defended her : but the duty is imperative, and may in a very few words be done. The accusation is worthy of the admirable taste of those relations who, against Burke's own strongest protestations, have wished him to be considered the author of Junius, and advanced pretensions, which he in the most decided manner disclaimed, of a direct descent from the aristocratic stock of De Burgh.

Mrs. Burke had in reality much less to bequeath than they have supposed. There was no great estate to leave ; there was no amount of funded property ; there were no domestic hoards. When it is stated, as Burke's executors knew well, and as the late Lord Fitzwilliam testified,\* that Mrs. Burke paid off all her husband's heavy debts, it is easy to see where the bulk of the property went. That any positive promise was made to the Havilands is very doubtful. On that point we can only hear one side : and everything known of Mrs. Burke's character shows that had she really made such a promise it would have been performed. As is frequently the case in such matters, Mrs. Haviland probably mis-

\* Note to correspondence, vol. iv. p. 232.

took her own expectation for a direct obligation. That Mrs. Burke, according to the terms of Burke's will, was free to choose her own nephew as her heir, rather than any other person, there can be no doubt whatever. Burke appears to have apprehended some such dissatisfaction as afterwards occurred, and therefore in the most comprehensive terms placed everything at his wife's disposal. After solemnly recording his deep obligations to her, he wrote, "I therefore, by my last and only will, devise, leave, and bequeath to my entirely beloved and incomparable wife, Jane Mary Burke, the whole real estate of which I shall die seized, whether lands, rents, or houses, in absolute fee simple; as also my personal estate, whether stock, furniture, plate, money, or securities for money, annuities for lives or for years, be the said estate of what nature, quality, extent, or description it may, to her sole uncontrolled possession and disposal, as her property, in any manner which may seem proper to her, to possess and dispose of the same, whether it be real or personal estate, by her last will or otherwise; it being my intention that she may have as clear and uncontrolled a right and title thereto and therein as I possess myself as to the use, expenditure, sale, or devise. I hope these words are sufficient to express the absolute, unconditioned, and unlimited right of complete ownership I mean to give her to the said lands and goods; and I trust that no words or surplusage or ambiguity may vitiate this my clear intention. There are no persons who have a right, or, I believe, a disposition to complain of this bequest, which I have duly weighed and made on a proper consideration of my duties, and the relations in which I stand." Language cannot be clearer nor more emphatic. No relatives of Burke, inspired with a be-

coming reverence for his memory, or with a due respect for Mrs. Burke, could ever, after having read such words, have thought of bringing forward the accusation that has been made.

It has, however, been hinted that, this will having been made before Mrs. Haviland was left a widow, the circumstances which afterwards arose were not anticipated, and that had Burke foreseen them he would have made other dispositions in favour of his niece. This impression will be found just as unfounded as the rest of the ungenerous imputations against Mrs. Burke. It is true that the will was made a year before the death of Mrs. Haviland's husband; but, at her bereavement, she was not left destitute; on the contrary, she was in very comfortable worldly circumstances and her child was the heir to considerable property. Besides, a few months before his own death, and long after that of Major Haviland, Burke added the codicil to his will, recommending the school at Penn to his political friends, and again renewed, in express terms, the absolute disposal of his property to Mrs. Burke. "On reading the above will," he wrote, "I have nothing to add, or essentially to alter: but one point may want to be perfected and explained. In leaving my lands and hereditaments to my wife, I find that I have omitted the words which in deeds create an inheritance to my wife, Jane Mary Burke, and her heirs for ever, in free, absolute, unconditional fee simple." In the printed copies of this will, there is some typographical error respecting the exact date of the codicil; but the mention of the Penn school indicates plainly that it was added during the last few months of his life.

Still it may be said, that in leaving everything to Mrs. Burke's free disposal, he might at least expect that she

would make the Havilands her heirs. About this, however, there is the greatest doubt. The manner in which he is so careful to guard his wife's independence, seems to indicate just the contrary. It must be remembered that Mrs. Burke was the daughter of the good Dr. Nugent, who had been so kind to Burke in his early days of authorship, and that from the time of the marriage the whole family had lived together in the most perfect love and confidence. Burke looked upon the Nugents with quite as much affection as upon the Havilands; if there was any difference in his regard, it was indeed in favour of the Nugents. The only person directly mentioned by name in the will to the protection of his great friends is Mrs. Burke's own brother, whose son she made her heir. "I bequeath," wrote Burke, "my brother-in-law, John Nugent, and the friends in my poor son's list, which is in his mother's hands, to their protection." In weighing all the evidence impartially, it is clear then that Mrs. Burke had an absolute right to dispose of what she had to leave as she pleased; that the choice she made of her nephew as her heir Burke would have considered her fully justified in making, and that it would have been quite agreeable to his own feelings. Indeed, the only excuse for saying so much on the miserable subject of contention is, that nothing would have pained himself more than the charge which the Havilands thought fit to make, and have had inserted in his biographies, against his beloved and devoted wife's memory.

A few months after her death, the house which she had occupied to the last was destroyed by fire. All that was pleasant and beautiful in the abode became a dream of the past. Some blackened walls and charred timbers alone remained to tell the tale of desolation. Perhaps it



was better so. No stranger was long to inhabit the mansion which had been the scene of so much pure enjoyment, so much domestic affection, so many noble aspirations. Its fate was symbolical of the sad family history of which it had been the scene. The blackened ruins were a fitting memorial of blighted hopes, and of a broken heart. Yet were they memorable; and ought to have been respected. I cannot give credit to the tale that has been told me about the purchaser of the estate, wishing, in resentment for the spirit in which Burke had carried on his investigations into the peculation of the officials at Madras, to eradicate every trace of him and his family from the soil. No English gentleman could surely wish to rival the evil eminence of the Jesuit, who, not being able to answer the eloquent accusations of Pascal, exulted in driving the plough over the ground where Port Royal had stood. But certain it is, that the spectacle of neglect and wantonness in the grounds where Burke's mansion, with its beautiful wings and stately colonnades, once raised its head so high, inspires feelings which even the imaginary omnipotence of a landed proprietor cannot wisely disregard. To attempt to root out Burke's memory from Beaconsfield, is as absurd as to attempt to obliterate his name from the English history, or his works from the English language.

## CONCLUSION.

HAVING endeavoured carefully to develope Burke's career in strict chronological sequence, through the varied scenes of the latter half of the eighteenth century, I willingly leave the facts to produce their own impression, without adding to the long narrative any formal dissertation or elaborate summing-up. A few general observations, and some brief remarks on points which have been raised respecting certain transactions in Burke's private life, will probably, however, be demanded. With them I terminate a work which has employed nearly all the laborious hours of more than eight years.

It has been said of Cicero, that whatever may have been his faults, he, more than any preceding philosopher or orator, taught his countrymen that, as citizens and as rulers, they had strict duties to perform. As has been occasionally intimated throughout this narrative, Burke's political philosophy was strictly a moral philosophy. The popular notions of good and evil, of right and wrong, as inculcated in the ordinary precepts of the Christian religion, were his standard of estimating all political actions. Very early in his public career he declared to Dr. Markham that this was the principle on which he judged public men and public events; "and," said he, "I neither now do, nor ever will, admit of any other."\* Some re-

\* Correspondence, vol. i. p. 332.

prehensible practices in the world of politics have been spoken of as not only crimes, but blunders; and it has been lightly said that in such cases the blunder was worse than the crime. With Burke every crime, under whatever pretence committed, was necessarily, and for that very reason, a blunder; and never could produce ultimate good. On this principle he judged the tyrannical conduct of the English Government during the American war, the cruelties of Hastings to the Rohillas and the Begums of Oude, and the atrocities committed by the French Revolutionists. In this single balance he weighed all these misdeeds perpetrated in different continents and by different authors; and finding them all wanting, he unhesitatingly condemned them all. Looking throughout his whole life, he will never be found defending any act of cruelty, or apologizing for any deed which the moral feelings of mankind would at once declare to be wrong. It was from his teachings and writings Fox constructed the axiom that "what was morally wrong, could never be politically right;" and though on the lips of some statesmen this dogma would pass for mere words, to Burke's mind it represented the most vital truth in the whole science of politics. Had he, after the sentiments he expressed in such eloquent language on the American war, defended the oppressive proceedings of Hastings, or of the French Revolutionists, he would in fact have been guilty of much greater inconsistency than any with which he has yet been charged.

With this deep conviction impressed on his moral nature, he found himself also endowed with the most intense sensibility. Hence, to the firm belief that all crimes were follies, as well as wickednesses, was added an utter horror of cruelty, and the most intense sympathy with human

suffering. His philanthropy was thus actuated both by reason and impulse; and these two qualities moved in strict concert, wielding and directing in their march intellectual powers and attainments, such as are never bestowed except on the few great imperial intellects that have adorned and enlightened the world. That Burke was a man of the highest genius, taking rank with Shakespeare and Bacon, was enthusiastically admitted by the greatest of his contemporaries; and men like Mackintosh and Macaulay, who may be considered to represent the two succeeding generations, have, with nearly all the rest of the world, ratified the verdict. To attempt to analyze that vast genius, and to show the different qualities and the different proportions of which it was composed, would be an absurd and hopeless undertaking. We can study it; we can admire it; we can seek to comprehend it; but it would be vain and foolish to attempt to dissect it into its constituent parts.

Burke has been called indeed by a great writer of the present day, "a resplendent and far-seeing rhetorician rather than a deep and subtle thinker."\* These words have always struck me as involving an extraordinary inconsistency. To be a subtle thinker indeed Burke made no pretensions; with all respect to the memory of Oliver Goldsmith, Burke never exhibited any propensity to indulge in intellectual refinements; but there seems no corresponding connection between deep thinking and subtle thinking. When it is admitted that a man of genius was "far-seeing," and this quality certainly could not very well in Burke's case be denied, it seems necessarily to follow that the same man must have been a deep thinker. What is the use of thought if it does not enable a

\* Mr. Carlyle, in his *Essay on Johnson*.

statesman to foresee? And how can extraordinary foresight exist without extraordinary depth of thought? The one seems a natural consequence of the other. That Burke was a great rhetorician is of course undeniable; but it may be found on an impartial estimate that he was a thinker before he was a rhetorician; and that it is totally to misunderstand his life and genius to look upon him solely or even mainly as a rhetorician. The sympathizing student of his works will find underneath the brilliant surface of the stream a mighty under-current of deep thought. On what political subject indeed was he not a thinker, his views most profound, and his thoughts far in advance of his contemporaries? If separately the subjects of free-trade, the American war, law reform, economical reform, prison reform, India reform, and Catholic emancipation be taken, on each and on all these questions he will be found to have been pre-eminently a thinker. And on the question of the French Revolution, however people, judging of course according to their own prepossessions, may differ with him as to the justice of his views, I should think that there are at this day very few persons indeed who would be prepared to say that those remarkable writings were not distinguished by profound thought, whether rightly or wrongly applied. Burke can indeed only be justly characterized as the greatest political thinker of his time, and perhaps of any time. If his works could be divested of all their powerful rhetoric, there would still remain the massive proportions of an intellectual giant.

It has, however, been gravely doubted in some quarters, whether the man with these great qualities was really a statesman. Of course this is merely a dispute about words; and it is well that we should have some

precision in our ideas. If Burke were not a statesman, so much the worse for statesmanship. What English public man could be compared with him in knowledge, eloquence, or philosophy? What public man was ever even more practical in all his political views? Much of his dislike to the French Constitutionalists in the first Assembly, sprang from his conviction that their theories were not only mischievous as speculations, but totally unfitted for the world of practice. He was never, in all his long struggle for political reforms, found countenancing visionary schemes. When advocating the liberty of the press and the freedom of publishing the parliamentary debates, he adopted means to effect his object. When he sought to prevent the American war, he proposed a scheme of pacification which, had it been accepted at the time, as Franklin admitted, would have given content to the Colonies. When he sought to retain for juries the power which courtly lawyers wished to take away from them, of deciding what was, and what was not a libel, he brought forward an enacting bill fully securing to them all for which he had contended. When he sought to put an end to the evils of the African slave-trade and the horrors of the middle passage, he framed a code of regulations which would have gradually but surely attained the end. When he sought to carry out plans of economical reform, and to diminish the influence of the Crown, he was not satisfied with making eloquent speeches on the subject, but introduced a broad and general scheme, which some of the pretended supporters of the popular measure blamed for being only too well fitted for the purpose. As Paymaster of the Forces, he did not merely talk about great measures of reform, but fully and effectually reformed his own office. As an

Indian reformer he not only condemned all abuses, but showed how to every abuse there was a remedy, constructed in all its severe simplicity the celebrated India Bill, of which the tendency is now better understood than in the days of fierce party struggle, when the monarchy, the Church of England, and the East Indian Company were all classed together as sacred institutions; and he framed at the same time a subsidiary scheme so admirable that even Pitt himself was obliged to adopt it, as an auxiliary to his own imperfect bill. When condemning in the strongest manner the errors and crimes of the French Revolutionists, he showed clearly the fatal tendency of their measures; and, as the advocate of a war with the Jacobin Republic, was so far from indulging in generalities, that he brought forward his own plan of warfare. On the business of the Roman Catholics and Ireland, which occupied so many hours of the last years of his life, he indicated clearly how the work of emancipation could be carried out; and what practical evils necessarily would follow from the temporizing and impolitic vacillation of a government that feared to look boldly in the face dangers inevitably approaching.

There is a growing tendency at the present day to confound the functions of the statesman with those of the administrator, and to judge of the capacities of a public man for office by the length of time he manages to continue in office. To those who judge in this manner the statesmanship of Burke is of course quite unintelligible. He was very little in office; and perhaps a life spent in opposition may at length have disqualified him to fulfil with mere diplomatic tact and temper the duties of office. The official has his reward: it is immediate; it is gratifying; it is substantial. But after all this glorification

of mere worldly success, the noblest sympathies of mankind will ever be with the few who can conscientiously, through good and evil report, suffer for great causes, satisfied with struggling year after year in hopeless minorities, if by that means the interests of truth and justice can be advanced ; and amid difficulties, discouragement, and obloquy, planting, far in advance, the lofty standard of progressive civilization to guide the struggling column coming after them in the onward march. Of this class of public men Burke was the archetype. He was so far before his contemporaries that they could scarcely make him out. It is of little consequence whether this be called statesmanship or not ; but it would be well for mankind if there were a little more of it in the world. It is the same quality that has distinguished the great apostles, martyrs, and heroes in all time.

This is the great characteristic feature of Burke in public life. He appeared constantly asking himself, not whether his opinions would at any given moment command a Parliamentary majority, but whether they were not intrinsically right, whether they were not such as time would at length ratify. It is this characteristic which gives the highest interest to his political career.

His private life and public life were singularly harmonious ; and the one reflected a beautiful light upon the other. The most rancorous enemies, quite as much as his most attached friends, admitted his domestic virtues : even Sheridan, who, in his later years, was so willing to wound him, could only sneer at his morality as almost too perfect for frail humanity. The world has some interest in knowing that the private life of the great political moralist can bear the closest inspection ; and that the same lofty principles and elevating sentiments which in-



spired his public actions, and are expressed in his published writings, influenced him in the most intimate relations of his own home. He was the most affectionate of husbands, the most anxious of fathers, the kindest of brothers, the most faithful of friends. Enmity itself, inspired by the fiercest party-spirit, did not venture to cast a single aspersion upon him in his private capacity. If he had any fault, it was in carrying his attachment to the members of his own household almost to excess, endowing them with every virtue and looking upon them as the most perfect of human beings. In his eyes they could never do wrong: he believed them all to be as upright, as generous, and as high-minded as he was himself.

If this were an error, it was at least an error on the side of virtue. The most rigid of censorial moralists would scarcely visit it with a very heavy censure. It does not seem much to the discredit of a great man to say that, while requiring no indulgence himself, he was inclined to look with much indulgence on the conduct of his own relations and friends.

Yet it is on this very warmth of feeling and tenderness of heart to those of his own blood that certain charges against Burke's memory have lately been made, on which his biographer would probably be accused of a neglect of duty if he were not to say a few words.

It is well that we should have some principle to proceed upon in criticizing the lives of the great men who are no longer here to defend themselves. In their own time they may perhaps have their actions subjected to the strictest investigation, and their claims to the highest virtue tried by the severest test; but there is much that appeals to the best feelings of our nature in the old proverb

which tells us to speak nothing but good of the dead. It may be at least affirmed, without the slightest qualification, that, in looking at the lives of those who have rendered great services to mankind, they ought never to be condemned except on the clearest and most undeniable evidence. It is against the most ordinary notions of justice or fairness to seek to stigmatize a great statesman, philosopher, and philanthropist on an assumption which cannot be substantiated, and even to consider the absence of evidence to the contrary as a direct proof of guilt. What patriot or hero could be considered spotless, if whatever was unexplained in his private life was at once, and as a matter of course, to be unhesitatingly set down to his discredit? It is not for the biographer of a noble man of genius to prove a negative. Those who make the charges against him should themselves bring forward their proofs, and bring very unquestionable vouchers indeed for every unworthy calumny which they think it becoming to rake up against the memory of the illustrious dead. Even when such charges can be clearly sustained, they ought to be admitted with sorrow; and the writer who selects for himself the invidious office of finding out faults and errors in the private lives of the good and great men who have gone before us, ought not greedily to seize on the slightest indications of human frailty, and, as though he were making some great discovery pregnant with benefit to mankind, cry out joyfully, Eureka! The discovery, even though it should be made, is but a poor one after all; had Lauder succeeded in convicting Milton of wholesale plagiarism, there would still have been no great glory attaching to his name; and he who sets himself to work industriously to rob the world of the little virtue it possesses is, by his moral levelling, acting on a

servile principle, of which the sole tendency is to confound the best of men with the worst.

When the evidence of guilt is undeniable, it is more agreeable to seek to palliate the errors of the noble dead than to visit them too harshly upon their memory. Algernon Sidney, for instance, will ever be remembered as a patriot and hero ; and we should far more gladly see the accusation of his having received, with other members of the popular party, money from the French ambassador satisfactorily explained away, than any evidence an historical student at the present day might bring forward to magnify this reproach upon his character. Charges of vanity, weakness, time-serving, and cowardice rest heavily upon Cicero ; and yet those who have studied reverently the matchless style and noble eloquence of the great Roman orator and philosopher, can sympathize intensely with his English biographer, Middleton, in his manifest partiality to one who did so much to enlighten and civilize the world. Many accusations have been made against Lord Bacon and William Penn ; and the same literary journal which has been made the medium of these strange aspersions against Burke has contained very able defences of Bacon and Penn for conduct which their greatest admirers must admit at least to require some defence. Even when the defence is not quite satisfactory, the vindictory pages can be read with admiration and sympathy ; and the writer has the best wishes of every admirer of genius and philanthropy. As the champion of greatness and goodness it is not inglorious even to fail, and to succeed is indeed a noble triumph.

But how is it with Burke ? As an orator his name ranks worthily with that of Cicero ; his patriotism was as ardent as that of Sidney ; as a philosopher he may stand with-

out a blush in the same class as Bacon ; as a philanthropist he can fully bear comparison with Penn. No imputations like those which weigh on the lives of these men, rest upon his name. He took no money from a foreign king ; he is not accused of seeking to bring his friend to the block ; he was never convicted of bribery on the seat of judgment ; he was never even suspected of using wrongfully any influence he had acquired in high places, or of advising any unworthy subserviency to illegal power. He has never required a defender from any crime : and has generally been admitted a model of patriotic disinterestedness.

Even when this very imputation, or assumption, for it is nothing more, on which such a superstructure of evil has recently been attempted to be raised, is stated in exact words, it is difficult to say whether it really amounts to anything at all. The only manner in which the accusation can be made to have any substance is to indulge in vague allusions and conjectures, and to shrink from plain statements of fact. How, it is asked, did Burke acquire his estate at Beaconsfield ? We find him entering Parliament a poor man ; he suddenly becomes the proprietor of a mansion, built in the style of Buckingham House, with wings and colonnades. He is even found to be driving about with four black horses to his carriage. At the same time his cousin William and his brother Richard were, like a great many other very respectable persons at that time, speculating in India Stock, and their speculations, after having prospered for a time, turned out unfortunate, with others after Hyder Ali's first invasion of the Carnatic. They had been connected in some of these transactions with Lord Verney, who found himself very nearly ruined, and afterwards brought an action

against Burke himself as a partner in the business with William and Richard Burke. Burke however denied his obligation by affidavit; an English jury unhesitatingly believed him on his oath, and Lord Verney was nonsuited. Now supposing every one of these facts to be admitted, and that when Richard and William Burke were prosperous, in 1768 Edmund did borrow from them a portion of the purchase-money of the estate of Gregories, does this prove him guilty of even an impropriety, much less of a damning crime? When the houses of Constable and Ballantine failed in 1826, and Sir Walter Scott became a debtor to so large an amount, his estate at Abbotsford was found to be settled on his eldest son. In this transaction there was perhaps something of which a creditor might have had reason to complain; but what would be said of a critic who on this account would seek to asperse the whole life of this great and true-hearted Scotchman?

Burke, however, does not require even this indulgence. Every shilling he ever owed was paid before his widow died, and no mystery was ever made of the manner in which he acquired the estate which Garrick, Johnson, and all the rest of his friends so heartily rejoiced to see him possessing. The amount of the purchase-money, twenty-three thousand pounds, was stated soon after Burke's death, when all the facts were well known; and the very holder of a bond, from whom five thousand of the twenty-three were borrowed, was also mentioned by name. This bond was not liquidated until very many years after it was given, and the greater portion of the rest of the money was undoubtedly obtained from Lord Rockingham. Richard and William Burke undoubtedly advanced something, but not certainly the largest amount.

Burke also was not, as it has been asserted, a penniless adventurer one year, and the possessor of an estate worth twenty-three thousand pounds the next. He had inherited, in 1765, the property of his brother Garret. This is no assumption, as his letters to the Nagles show him coming into possession, and acting in the kindest and most considerate manner to his late brother's dependents. As we do not find any mention of this Irish property after he had purchased his English estate, this inheritance was also evidently sold, in order that he might raise from it a portion of the money for Gregories.

In all this there is surely nothing very extraordinary. Many great and good men have acquired estates in a very much more questionable manner, without their claims to the highest virtue being ever disputed. But even though we could not account for the possession at all, this would be no reason, in the absence of direct evidence, for aspersing Burke's reputation. If such a method of criticism were to prevail, every great man and public benefactor would for the future have to leave, for the inspection of posterity, a scrupulously-balanced private ledger, showing the exact amount of money he had obtained, and carefully stating the sources of each acquisition. Otherwise he would have to expect no mercy, no charitable construction, no candid consideration; and the purest patriot and the most disinterested philanthropist might be stigmatized as a speculator. This theory of the Private Ledger, for interpreting the lives and works of great men, has certainly the merit of being somewhat novel; whether it is as equally elevating may, however, admit of a doubt.

Burke himself had no dealings in India Stock. "I never," he said to the Prussian gentleman who asked his advice,

“had any concern in the funds of the East India Company.” Not a shadow of evidence of his participation in such transactions have I ever seen worthy of being put forward in opposition to his own simple affirmation. The mere mention of his name in one single instance as an East Indian proprietor with Lord Verney and others, can never be quoted as trustworthy against all the decisive testimony to the contrary : the initial, E., for Edmund, is in that letter, if such a letter really exists, evidently an error. The oath he took in the court of justice, during the lawsuit with Lord Verney, must be held to settle the matter, by all who think that Edmund Burke was a man to be believed on his oath. Who will venture to say the contrary ? If there be such a man, it would indeed with him be useless to enter into any controversy.

This, indeed, is the whole question. Macaulay, in alluding to the motives which had been imputed to Burke in undertaking the greatest labour of his life, said, “*Men, utterly unacquainted with the elevation of his mind*, have tried to find some discreditable motive in his undertaking the impeachment of Hastings ; but they have altogether failed.”\* These words, “men utterly unacquainted with the elevation of his mind,” show us the fatal deficiency of persons who would thus try, on no foundation whatever, to connect Burke’s name with any sordid suggestions. The fault is not in him, but in themselves. Those who can survey his whole life, from the cradle to the grave ; behold him spending his studious musing and earnest youth in high communion with the pious Richard Shackleton ; give his last half-guinea to Joseph Emin, and exhort him to trust in God ; send Barry to Rome, and maintain him there while him-

\* Essay on Warren Hastings.

self struggling with poverty; voluntarily resign his pension of three hundred a year on the Irish establishment, rather than incur the slightest imputation of a breach of faith from William Gerard Hamilton; remain faithfully attached to Lord Rockingham through many years of hopeless opposition, while rank and wealth and all worldly dignities would have been at once at his command had he chosen to act with the Court; rather than desert Lord Rockingham, decline in 1772 the offer to go out to India, at the head of a Commission, to regulate the affairs of the Company, though in such a position he must have had at his feet all the riches and power of the East; while at the threshold of office, and the height of his fame, take Crabbe into his own happy home, and save the young poet from destitution and despair; contending for fourteen years, without emolument and without thanks, to redress the wrongs of a distant people, whose faces he had never seen, and who were never to hear his name; falling prostrate and broken-hearted over the lifeless body of his son; in his retirement and desolation ever ready to alleviate the sufferings of the unhappy, himself panic-stricken at the evils which he saw coming upon the nations, and ever anxious for others and not for himself; as his last sickness was upon him, look at him calmly contemplating his approaching dissolution, and observe the lesson taught so solemnly by his noble and pathetic death: those who can see all this, and yet feel no reverence arise within them at the spectacle of such a life, and can try to degrade it by imputations of a mercenary nature, display a state of mind which it would be painful to characterize. It is the very reverse of that of Burke himself, who so nobly declared that, after his long experience, he had learnt to think



better of his fellow-men. Some persons may delight, if they please, in going from Dan to Beersheba, and finding that all is barren ; but it is to be hoped that they reflect only their own individual idiosyncrasies, instead of a just image of the world and of the greatest of mankind.

When some of the circumstances are examined which have been so greedily seized on as grounds of justification for these charges, every impartial person must be amazed at their insignificance. About the year 1846, Mr. Edward Jesse was shown, at Beaconsfield, an old man who had been Burke's gardener. He inhabited a miserable hovel, was reduced to great distress, and was allowed, not perhaps to the credit of the rich land-owners who had become possessed of Burke's estate, to drag on a miserable existence in extreme destitution. He loved to talk of his happier days, and of the great man whom he had formerly served, and mentioned that his old master had been accustomed to drive about with four black horses to his carriage. ~ Mr. Jesse recorded this statement in his *Favourite Haunts*, and it has been eagerly brought forward as one of the articles of charge in his strange impeachment of Burke's moral integrity. What magnificence ! it has been said. Four black horses to his carriage ! Where could Burke find the money to maintain such a splendid equipage ? Then, of course, follow a reiteration of the hints about gambling in India Stock, and Heaven only knows what besides. But, alas ! that magnificence which might seem great to a starving old gardener, as represented by four black horses to a carriage, could have certainly been equalled by any ordinary country-gentleman in Buckinghamshire of that day without his being obliged to mort-

gage his landed estate. Burke had much grass land. Four black horses could be fed by him at a very trifling expense. These horses, too, were accustomed to take their turn at the plough, and when they were harnessed to his carriage, they were quite as much a necessity as a luxury, as any one may satisfactorily convince himself who even at the present day will try to drive a coach up the steep hills and heavy roads round Beaconsfield. It would be ludicrous, if it were not melancholy, to see such flimsy materials attempted to be made the groundwork of such heavy accusations.

When driven from facts, the safe resource left is to take refuge in mysterious innuendoes and dark insinuations. It is said that we know very little of Burke; and how is it that we know so little? Were this true, it certainly would not justify the conclusion attempted to be drawn. But so far is it from being true that we know less of Burke than of any of his contemporary politicians, we really know more both of his public and private life, than of the public or private life of any other English statesman. John Somers, the patriot and statesman of the Revolution, is but a name; but would it be justifiable for that reason to endeavour to asperse the moral integrity of Somers? Coming further down, if what we know of Burke be compared with what we know of either Bolingbroke, Walpole, Chatham, Fox, Pitt, Sheridan, or Canning, it will be found that the information we have of him is infinitely fuller than that which we have about any one of these eminent men. No such complete series of letters, extending over Burke's whole public and private life, as those to the Shackletons, the Nagles, Lord Rockingham, and Dr. Laurence, has been left by any other of his con-

temporaries. Even after all the combined efforts of Lord Holland, Mr. Allen, and Lord John Russell, the life of Fox is far from being so well known as that of Burke. It must also not be forgotten that it is not owing to himself, or to any attempt at concealment on his part, that more exact information on certain subjects is not given. His letters and papers, as Dr. Laurence said, were found left in a much more complete state than any of his friends expected; and they were entrusted to his literary executors, King and Laurence, for the very purpose of a biography. These friends died however; and the intention remained unfulfilled. The papers then passed into different hands; Burke's contemporaries, one after the other, vanished from the scene; and when his collected correspondence was published only some sixteen years ago, there was, through no fault of his own surely, not the means to answer every calumny which the perverted ingenuity of the malevolent might think fit to raise. Voluminous however as the series of Burke's correspondence is, there are still other letters unpublished, though the present Earl of Fitzwilliam, whose courtesy I acknowledge, out of obedience to the expressed wish of his father, who published all he thought necessary, declines to sanction any further publication of those documents. But neither in the letters which have been given to the world, nor in those which remain in the archives of Wentworth House, will there be found any grounds for the unworthy aspersions it has been attempted to cast upon this great and good man's name.

Then it has been urged that Burke destroyed some of his letters. It is very possible that he may have done so; for every statesman must destroy some portion of the number of letters he daily receives, and only keep

what he considers valuable and likely to be of future service. An eminent politician is frequently the reluctant depository of other men's secrets besides his own ; and he would be guilty of a scandalous neglect of duty, if, merely to gratify the prurient curiosity of the suspicious and cynical, he was to have all the epistolary communications ever sent to him carefully docketed for publication. Sydney Smith, on principle, destroyed all the letters he received, even from the most celebrated of his contemporaries. In fact, the publication of every scrap of paper on which an eminent person has written for the inspection of a friend or in the hurry of business, has a tendency to destroy all sincerity and frankness, and may very possibly be carried to a mischievous excess. It ought not to be considered imperative on a public man to expose all his private affairs ; and other motives beside that of a dread of investigation, may surely be supposed to influence him in sometimes drawing a delicate veil around them. Even if the fact were proved, though it most certainly is not, that Burke deliberately destroyed certain private letters which he did not wish to be preserved, to argue from it that he had faults and errors of his own to conceal, is a construction as charitable and noble as that of the Jacobite slanderers of the good Queen Mary, because, when she felt her fatal illness upon her, she sat up during a long winter's night in the palace at Kensington, and committed whole packets of her correspondence to the flames. Dr. Johnson, too, in his last illness, burnt bundles of letters and diaries ; but none who read of that pathetic scene, will feel disposed on such a ground to suggest ungenerous insinuations against the private character of old Samuel. Notwithstanding all Boswell's industry, there are important passages in Johnson's life

totally unexplained, and whole years indeed, of which we know absolutely nothing ; but no person would surely be justified, in this absence of evidence to the contrary, in inferring evil. Was Burke so very much worse than his friend and conversational rival, that his life is to be criticized in a different spirit ? They were both eminently pure, kind, and pious ; charitable and disinterested in pecuniary matters to an extreme ; the respect they felt for each other we can feel for them both ; when all that we know of them is good, according to the great law of Baconian induction, and not through any foolish attempt at panegyric, we are justified in assuming that what remains behind must be also good.

Burke's life, for more than thirty years, was passed in the full light of day. He could have concealed nothing to his discredit, had he wished to do so ; for he had the most malignant enemies, who would have gladly put upon him the brand of shame. After his quarrel with Hamilton, detective spies were sent to trace him even from his cradle ; and yet was there no evil found in him. When the estate at Gregories was purchased, Garrick wrote exultingly, how Hamilton must have had his bosom torn with rage and jealousy at the news. Had there been anything improper in the purchase, it would at once have been discovered, and at once have been proclaimed. During the fourteen years of Burke's long warfare with the corruption of Indian officials, when he publicly laid before the Court of Directors certain heads of inquiry into the misconduct of Paul Benfield, and during the whole course of the impeachment, when all the records of the India House were laid open to Hastings for his defence, if the slightest imputation could have been made against Burke with respect to any transactions in

India Stock, it would have been at once known, and have been most industriously exaggerated into an enormous crime. But nothing of the kind ever occurred. A critic at the present day may rest assured that in respect to the affairs of India, it is not for him to find out anything to Burke's discredit that could have possibly escaped the rancour and malice of the Paul Benfields, Major Scotts, Sir Elijah Impeys, and the whole tribe of Eastern offenders with whom Burke was perpetually at war.

It has never been denied that for a year or two, at a time when speculating in India Stock had become the rage almost as much as the South Sea bubble of an earlier part of the century, Richard and William Burke followed the example set by Members of Parliament, cabinet ministers, and the highest dukes of the land. That however, at this day, their transactions at a particular period should be invidiously dwelt upon, for the sole reason because they were the kinsmen of Edmund, and he is to be made answerable for their pecuniary misfortunes, though their conduct seems to have been quite as upright as that of most of their contemporaries, and certainly much more so with respect both to Government and India Stock than that of Charles Townshend, who was the Chancellor of the Exchequer, scarcely seems to correspond with the simplest principles of equity.

Richard Burke, the brother of Edmund, appears to have been unfortunate in some speculations in the funds; and that is all. As was said of him, in the notice of his death which appeared in the newspapers and the periodicals of the time, he was a man of the strictest honour. Early made famous as he was in Goldsmith's poem, *Retaliation*, his errors were certainly not of a mean or sordid kind. Frolicsome and good-natured, he was kind and

generous even to a fault ; and his heart was as tender as that of a child. As we have seen, Sir Joshua Reynolds loved him like a brother ; and as Recorder of Bristol he was generally respected, even by the Tories who had voted against his great kinsman. It was about one of the last things to be anticipated, that it should be sought to calumniate Richard Burke, in order that some portion of the slander might be reflected upon his noble brother.

No secret was ever made of William Burke's transactions in India Stock. Horace Walpole mentions expressly that it was as a stockholder William Burke took part in the debates on the Company's affairs in the House of Commons ; and though Walpole is ready enough to censure and ascribe bad motives, he does not mention those speculations as though they were in any respect extraordinary, much less blamable.\* William Burke was careless ; he was extravagant ; and he was consequently frequently pressed for money ; but he certainly was not a worse man than the Whateleys and the Knoxes who wished, like him, to make their way through the subordinate official situations. Walpole had peculiar means of knowing everything about William Burke, because he was Under-Secretary of State in General Conway's own office ; and, much to Horace's indignation and to the great regret of the gallant but vacillating general, voluntarily resigned his under-secretaryship rather than desert the Rockingham party. How many third-rate politicians of that day would have thus sacrificed place to principle ? In kindness to Emin and Barry, he was also the zealous co-operator with Edmund ; and those who sought to perform their critical functions with impartiality, would read Barry's memoirs and

\* *Memoirs of the Reign of George III.*, vol. iii. p. 22.

see how William Burke acted to this poor young Irish artist, before selecting from the correspondence of a political opponent like Cornwallis any aspersions written of William Burke to another political opponent like Dundas. Dundas commenced his public life avowedly offering himself to the highest bidder. "Wha wants me?" was the inscription he placed on his banner; he made himself the ready and unscrupulous defender of the worst acts of Lord North, and subsequently of Pitt; he was afterwards impeached and convicted for misconduct with respect to the public money of a highly censurable nature. He has, however, been considered, on the whole, as a politician whose character may be allowed to pass; for, with many shortcomings, he had some genial and manly qualities. But would he have ever thought of resigning, at the outset of his public life, an Under-secretaryship of State, as William Burke did? He would have roared with laughter at the idea. In what William Burke differed from the politicians of his class, he differed for the better; and no fault would ever have been found with him, had it not been for the purpose of, through him, seeking to degrade his illustrious friend and kinsman. It is too much surely to expect of a public man that he should, in a time of low political morality, not only himself exhibit the most scrupulous purity and disinterestedness, but that all his relatives should rise as highly above the level of the rest of the world; and that if they happen not in every respect to do so, his virtues are to be disregarded, and their sins are to be visited as unpardonable crimes upon his name and memory.

A stranger unacquainted with the events of Burke's life might suppose, from the undue importance which, in a certain quarter, has been given to the purchase of Gre-



gories and the proceedings of Richard and William Burke in 1767 and 1768, that the acquisition of his small estate at Beaconsfield was the great fact of Burke's existence. But surely this is strangely to misinterpret his career. His rural tastes were indeed gratified by the cultivation of his farm ; his hours of relaxation were made pleasant and healthy to him ; but in comparison with the great political principles he asserted and the great causes he had so deeply at heart, what sort of a house he lived in was a matter to him of very small moment. It would certainly have surprised himself and the friends who knew him best, to find him attacked on account of the magnificence of his home. Much the greater portion of his time was spent, not at Beaconsfield, but in London ; and the last thing with which he could have been reproached, was the splendour of his domestic establishment in Gerrard Street or in Duke Street, St. James's. It was of the humblest pretensions. He had no permanent residence in London indeed at all ; but generally contented himself with renting a small house during the Parliamentary season. Even when he asked a few friends to dinner his table was, as Wraxall and others have remarked, very plainly supplied, and generally with provisions from his own farm. The four black horses were not driven about the London streets ; but, while their master was engaged in his legislative duties, remained in the paddock at Beaconsfield. In town, so far from attempting to rival the style of his friends the Marquis of Rockingham and the Duke of Devonshire, he lived like a plain English commoner, whose pecuniary resources were known to be of a very limited extent, and who was not ashamed of the narrowness of his fortune. All these circumstances I have endeavoured to point out in their place and order ; and I should

gladly have refrained, at this close of a great undertaking, from referring to accusations which, as I survey that unpretending family grave in the little country church at Beaconsfield, jar most painfully upon the feelings and seem almost like desecration.

In tracing Burke's proceedings through so many years, it seems scarcely possible not to see that there was, as our great dramatist has so finely expressed it, a daily beauty in his life. We need not feel rebuked at such a spectacle; we need not try to degrade it by aspersions, from which of all that can be imagined it was the most absolutely free. The influence of such a life and such works has been incalculable in elevating the tone of our public men. His writings and political conduct, when properly studied, cannot but be of the highest service to the young, who, in this great political country, are to take their part in the workings of our free government, and in the hearing of the world, thanks to the agency of a free press, discuss every great political question as it must arise. Statesmen, since Burke's time, have not been ashamed to follow, with unequal steps indeed, the example he set. Seeing in him the most untiring industry, the highest public spirit, and the purest morality, united with the most brilliant genius, the best of them have, with more or less success, sought, like him, to grapple with the great problems of their age; and to acknowledge earnestly that the legislator, in a country boasting of its high civilization and liberal government, has duties, transcending those of the mere party politician, to the suffering and the oppressed in all the wide dominions of the British crown.

About the part he took in the quarrel with the American colonies all intelligent men of every political party

have long entertained but one opinion. His words remain on record ; he still speaks as from the grave ; and the wisdom of the course he recommended, the eloquence with which his views were enforced, and the consistency with which, in spite of many temptations, he persevered in his resistance to the advisers of that impolitic contest, from the time of the repeal of the Stamp Act, throughout Lord North's long administration, are universally acknowledged. We in vain look through the lives of all other English statesmen, or even through the literature of ancient times, to find such a series of speeches as he delivered on that great and eventful struggle. Convincing in reasoning, lofty in tone, brilliant in expression, they stand unrivalled ; and must be read with ever-increasing admiration by countless generations in both hemispheres, so long as the civilization of the West endures and the English language is spoken either in the Old World or the New.

But some Tories have, without venturing to dispute the justice of his sentiments on the American question, intimated that his opinions afterwards underwent a change, and that his belief in the future improvement of his species was rudely shaken by the final separation of the colonies from the mother-country.\* Surely this authoritative assertion of some of those who profess themselves his enthusiastic admirers is not in the least justified by facts. Why Burke, who was the first to propose the acknowledgment of the independence of the Colonies, should be dissatisfied with the result which proved the foresight of his own views, it does not seem easy to imagine. Besides, from the first he maintained that a

\* Alison, in his *History of Europe* ; and Dr. Croly, in his *Life of Burke*.

separation was a much less evil than the reduction of the Colonies by arms, because that alternative must have rendered necessary the maintenance of an immense military establishment which, while holding America in subjection, must in the end have proved as fatal to the liberties of England. In fact, to assert that he changed his opinions on this subject is not only utterly to misunderstand his life, but deliberately to disregard his own solemn affirmation to the contrary. Writing of himself in the Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs, he said, "On the American war he never had any opinions which he has seen occasion to retract, or which he has ever retracted;" and in some very forcible passages, which it is scarcely possible to forget, he proceeded to reassert and justify all his old sentiments on this unhappy contention.

Lord North's Government was still in power when Burke commenced the next great labour of his political life; and it was continued almost without intermission until the last moments he sat in the House of Commons. During those fourteen years there was at least not the slightest appearance of inconsistency nor hesitation. Ministers might rise or fall, from war the country might return to peace, and years afterwards be again engaged in hostilities, the whole aspect of political affairs, and the condition of Europe might change; but still Burke persevered to redress what he regarded as the wrongs done to the native population of India, and to inflict condign punishment on the man whom he believed to have been their oppressor. The great accuser was nominally defeated: but was it in fact a defeat? Hastings was publicly acquitted; and yet the cardinal object which Burke had at heart was, as I have before said elsewhere, really

attained.\* There was no doing away with the immense moral effect of that great prosecution. The whole Indian interest might constitute itself the champion of the late Governor-General; every servant of the Company might consider himself bound in honour to become the apologist of the accused; each Governor-General who succeeded him might mention his name and achievements with respect. But not one of his successors ventured to imitate the crimes for which Burke had arraigned Hastings before the House of Lords. It has never been necessary to impeach another Governor-General of India, because none of them has ever forgotten that the first and greatest had actually been impeached; and, one of the most illustrious of them, the Marquis of Wellesley, afterwards declared, though Hastings was nominally acquitted, he was virtually convicted on every charge, and was only saved from an adverse verdict by the management of his lawyers. At the council-table, or at the head of armies, while wielding all the power of England, our Asiatic rulers have still remembered that great scene in Westminster Hall, the long investigations, the indignant invectives of Burke against injustice and oppression, and Hastings kneeling as a humble suppliant at the bar. From that day the improvement in the Indian government began. Every statesman in the East acknowledged a responsibility to the British Parliament, and felt that he might years afterwards be called to a severe account for any misdeeds in those distant provinces. Perhaps Burke was right then in regarding this as the greatest labour of his life. Such a beneficial result was deserving of the years of labour and obloquy which he so unflinchingly and so disinterestedly spent in the cause. It was easy for any one

\* The article on Burke in *Fraser's Magazine*, December, 1851.

to be a great philanthropist in the East after he had gone on the forlorn hope, and shown the way to those who followed with his maxims on their lips. Something has been eloquently written about the latest generations of Hindoos contemplating with respect the monument of Lord William Bentinck, as that of their most beneficent ruler. But the statue of the English statesman most deserving of their veneration, would be that of Edmund Burke.

His philanthropic services to India must have been much more gratefully acknowledged, had it not been for the part he took against the French Revolution. Being then separated from many of the friends who supported him in the impeachment, they were little anxious afterwards to praise any portion of his public career. Some years after his death, when the Whig party became once more united, the most influential of its organs of opinion were all devoted to the new or Holland-House Whigs. It was their object to praise Fox, and to censure Burke. This spirit may be strongly traced in the *Edinburgh Review* whenever Burke's name and writings are mentioned, from the time when this periodical was first established up to the period of the Reform Bill. Burke was spoken of by the Whig writers as a clever man indeed, whose inconsistency was undeniable, who had introduced into political affairs a philosophical tone indeed from his earlier studies, but whose views, especially in his later life, were most unsound, and whose conduct in breaking up the Whig party was of course most unjustifiable. Such was the usual language of Francis Jeffrey and Henry Brougham. But Jeffrey himself at a more recent period gradually softened in his animosity; and on reading in his old-age the *Correspondence* of

Burke, as it had just been published by Lord Fitzwilliam, the old Edinburgh Reviewer was struck with astonishment at the comprehensiveness, sagacity, and earnestness displayed in those letters, and on finishing their perusal, laid down the volumes, exclaiming, "The greatest and most accomplished intellect that England has produced for centuries ; and of a noble and loveable nature." \* At the same time, this same correspondence had such an effect on Macaulay, who, however, being of a younger generation, had never adopted the extreme prejudices against Burke displayed by the original contributors to the Scotch review, that in one of the great debates on the State of Ireland, alluding to Burke's views on the Catholic question, he who had some years before most absurdly declared, that Burke had felt with respect to the French Revolution, like an antiquary whose shield had been scoured, mentioned him emphatically as "that great statesman and philosopher—for such he was even in his errors." †

It was usual up to that time to look at Burke's view on France through the delusive medium of the Orleans Government. Our neighbours were supposed to have taken permanent refuge in the happy haven of a constitutional monarchy, and the French Revolution was authoritatively pronounced to be at last finished. Under this impression, it of course followed that Burke had after all miscalculated greatly, and that he ought to have foreseen France, after years of bloodshed and misery, happy, tranquillized, and regenerated under the benignant auspices of Louis Philippe. The events of a few subsequent years however gave a somewhat rude shock to the

\* Cockburn's *Life and Correspondence of Lord Jeffrey*, vol. i. p. 397.

† Macaulay's *Speeches*, corrected by himself, p. 307.

notions of those self-complacent reasoners. The French Revolution was, in 1848, not found to be quite complete. France had again, as Burke had said at the conclusion of the *Reflections*, to "pass through many varieties of untried being;" again she had to be "purified by fire and blood:" and yet her purification was still incomplete. At the contemplation of such a spectacle even Lord Brougham, who had, as an old *Edinburgh Reviewer*, written so many pages condemning Burke for not judging more charitably of the Revolution, and for not looking more hopefully at the future of France, gave to the world a long letter nominally addressed to the Marquis of Lansdowne, written in obvious imitation of the *Reflections*, vehemently assailing the Revolution of 1848 and the Provisional Government, particularly the most eminent and most respectable member of it, M. de Lamar-tine, and showing in the noble author's dislike to such a change, an inclination to sacrifice even the liberty of the press. This publication was throughout quite as intemperate and vehement as any page in the *Reflections*; though it was certainly not so remarkable as its great prototype for eloquence, wisdom, and foresight; and was not destined to be quite so long-lived, it being already forgotten, while Burke's book is still read, quoted, and admired.

Since then the Revolution has assumed another form. Again Europe stands in presence of an armed French Empire, wielding, in the name of democracy, all the centralized power of an uncontrolled despotism. Again, while the last pages of this book are passing through the press, Burke's latest writings against the ambitious designs of the French Directory are publicly quoted, as literally applicable to the present state of affairs; and



it will be happy for Europe and for England if the scenes of blood and strife which ushered in the nineteenth century be not again renewed. More than seventy years have passed away since the French Revolution first astonished the world, and Burke wrote down his opinions, against those of his political associates, that the result would not be what the ardent patriots of the first Assembly and their sanguine admirers in England so confidently hoped. Few persons can venture to say, after this eventful experience, when there has been such an opportunity of comparing fact with prophecy, that he was wrong and his opponents right. Other nations have since that time endeavoured to establish for themselves free constitutions ; but the degree of their success has been exactly according to the ratio in which they have shunned the example of France, and been content not to pull down everything which had been left to them from their ancestors, but to take some existing government to be reformed, and graft upon it the blessed shoots of freedom, justice, and moderation. But so pernicious has been the contrary course adopted by France, that he must indeed be a sanguine man who can deliberately declare the prospects of that real freedom which exalts the dignity of every individual who participates in it, making him proud to exercise the intellect God has given him to enlighten his fellow-creatures, and to perform conscientiously his duties as a citizen, to be really better in that country at this hour than on the day when the Bastille was stormed.

Whatever may be hidden in the future, the past justifies us in believing that Burke's reputation will not diminish. Great as it was in his own time, it has gradually increased ; and in Germany and America as well as here, though it is nearly a century since his public life began,

he stands alone, and is universally recognized as the great political classic of England. Though his father's house is now undistinguished among the dingy dwellings on Ormond Quay, in Dublin; though his countrymen have thought fit to erect on College Green a statue to Thomas Moore rather than to Burke, as their most illustrious citizen; though all the associations connected with his name have at Beaconsfield been so grossly neglected, if not wantonly destroyed; though it was only yesterday that his image was tardily set up in St. Stephen's passage; and though no monument has yet been erected to him in Westminster Abbey; yet he needs nothing to keep his name in remembrance. His fame has not been taken under the protection of any party; but it has soared far beyond that of every partisan. And those who reverently seek to enter into the spirit of his career by studying daily and nightly the memorials of his genius and virtue which yet remain to us, will feel not only grateful to him for the noble views of government and society that he has presented to them, but gradually look upon Burke with personal affection; and before taking leave of him as their teacher and guide, may feel something of the sentiment he himself expressed in the words with which he concluded his beautiful tribute to the memory of his friend, Sir Joshua:—

HAIL AND FAREWELL.

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